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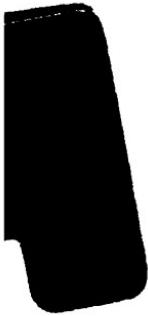
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**SHELLEY AND HIS FRIENDS
IN ITALY**

MOUNTAINS BEHIND VIAREGGIO



SHELLEY AND HIS FRIENDS IN ITALY

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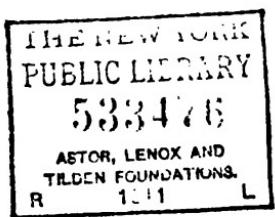
BY

HELEN ROSSETTI ANGELI

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1911**

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TO MY FATHER

PREFACE

I MUST express my very sincere acknowledgments for the kind assistance I have received on many hands from Shelleyan students and the owners of letters, &c., relative to the subject of this book. I am particularly obliged to Mrs. Lætitia Call, to Mr. H. Buxton Forman, and to Mr. C. Stacey Catty for their generous kindness in this respect ; also to Mr. Locock, Mr. Roger Ingpen, and others for obliging attentions in various ways. To Avv. Gian Francesco Guerrazzi, of Pisa, I owe much for his patience and courtesy in answering my questions, and in pointing out to me the many Shelley landmarks in and about Pisa. In adding my father's name to the list of my creditors, I should hesitate between saying too little or too much.

HELEN ROSSETTI ANGELI

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SHELLEY AND HIS FRIENDS IN ITALY

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY—REASONS FOR LEAVING ENGLAND

ON the 12th March, 1818, Percy Bysshe Shelley, that astounding son of a narrow-minded country gentleman of the county of Sussex, left the shores of England for the last time with all that the law, public opinion, and the morality of his day had left him of family, family ties and affections, with a few dear books, a moderate competence, an unsuccessful literary reputation, a notorious personal one, and many bitter memories.

His genius and his work, so far, had brought him no social or financial success, and few honours. Indeed, if we except the early and puerile blood-curdlers of the "Zastrozzi" type, his writings had brought him nothing but disaster. "The Necessity of Atheism," in 1811, procured his expulsion, and that of his friend, Thomas Jefferson Hogg, from University College, Oxford, and led to the complete and lasting rupture with his family, which was finally sealed by his quixotic marriage a few months later. "Queen Mab," printed in 1813, so far as

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it leaked into publicity, acted as a flaming red rag to the outwardly composed but potentially ferocious bull of social morality ; or, to reverse the metaphor, was itself the bull in the too, too brittle china shop of our customs and morals ; butting on one hand into religion, here trampling aristocracy or the commercial spirit underfoot ; here plunging head first into matrimony, there snorting defiance at our very diet ; creating terrible havoc among all the time-honoured idols, whose gilt and enamel and outer crusts it sent splintering and flying in all directions. From democracy to free-love, from atheism to vegetarianism—violent, immature, crude, and intolerant in its universal toleration—"Queen Mab" remains to this day a kind of pocket encyclopædia of the creeds and non-creeds of all young infidels and rebels against the powers that be.

"Alastor" procured the young poet some recognition in Leigh Hunt's review, the *Examiner*, but was damned by the rest of the critical tribe as incomprehensible and unreadable ; while the "Revolt of Islam" was instrumental in bringing down on its author's head a perfect tornado of personal and scurrilous abuse.

The effect of all this, and of Shelley's actions, which followed with uncommon logic on his ideas, was one of general outlawry from his family and society. His unfortunate first marriage with the charming Harriet Westbrook was the error of a very young and impulsively generous man. He tried to retrieve it rather late by acting in conformity with his principles, which allowed freedom of choice and change, and which did not admit any tie to be sacred which was not felt to be at least

tolerable by those bound by it ; and became as a consequence a very social leper to philosophers and philistines alike—one whose influence and whose society must be avoided as dangerous and whose money alone *non olet*. His family, not without cause or excuse from their own point of view, renounced him ; he had a long and bitter struggle to get bare sustenance out of the ample family resources to which he was legal heir ; his old friends, and those of Mary Godwin, who united herself to him at this juncture, with few exceptions, cut them ; his father-in-law refused to see him or publicly recognize him (though he privately bled him) till a pitiful tragedy permitted of the marriage tie bringing his daughter and her husband once again within the pale of respectability ; when the philosopher could trip blithely to the hymeneal chorus, and announce with belated dignity that his daughter had married "the elder son of a baronet." The grand climax was reached when the laws of his country, as interpreted by Lord Eldon, deprived him of the custody of the children of his first marriage. Over such memories Shelley must have pondered as the white shores of England gradually receded from view.

Lord Byron had left England two years previously, hounded out of the country by the ostracism of his own class, which availed itself of the opportunity afforded by the noble poet's separation from his wife, and her ominous silence on the causes thereof, to rid itself of a man whose pride, temper, morals, and genius were equally incomprehensible to it and perhaps equally obnoxious. The morals of Byron's set in the early days of the last century were not transparently pure, but they were more or less

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respectable, custom-bound, and presentable in public. Byron's were not, and he made no attempt to make them appear so. All social restraint was obnoxious to him, from that of monogamy to that of normal household hours for sleep and meals ; and marriage proved a dead failure. His grandson has somewhat lifted the veil on the real and graver cause for the separation, *i.e.*, Byron's incestuous pre-matrimonial connection with his half-sister, Augusta Leigh ; but of this little can have been suspected, and nothing proved, outside a very limited circle.

Shelley left England with many wounds bleeding in his heart ; but he was too deep a philosopher to nurture much bitterness or anger against his countrymen. Byron departed in great bitterness of heart. His pride was wounded by the attitude of his wife, and by the outlawry from society, to which he was attached, although he affected to despise it. Few of his old friends stood by him ; even his sister—for whom his love, however reprehensible, seems to have been the one truly strong and serious passion of his life—had come to terms with the enemy. He relieved his feelings in much bitterness of verse, and retired for the time to the Lake of Geneva.

Here Shelley and Byron met for the first time towards the end of May, 1816, two years and three months before their first meeting in Italy.¹ The

¹ Dr. John Polidori, Byron's young travelling physician, gives the 27th May as the date of the first meeting between the two poets in the following summary account : "Getting out L[ord] B[yrone] met M[ary] Wollstonecraft Godwin, her sister [sic] and Percy Shelley," and adds that after dinner "P[ercy] S[helley], the author of 'Queen Mab' came ; bashful, shy, consumptive ; twenty-six ; separated from his wife ; keeps the two daughters of Godwin, who practise his theories ; one L[ord] B[yrone's]. . . ."

former remained in Switzerland a little longer than three months, and then returned to England ; Byron had by then left England for the last time, and proceeded in October to Italy.

Byron and Claire Clairmont (the daughter of William Godwin's second wife, who accompanied the Shelleys) were already known to one another before meeting at Sécheron. Not long since—at the time when Byron's separation from his wife was pending—Claire, under a pseudonym, had addressed a letter to Byron in which she clearly offered him her love : in subsequent letters she asked him for advice as to a theatrical career and his opinion on a novel she was writing ; and by some date previous to the middle of April it is clear they had met. When they re-encountered each other in May at Sécheron, Claire was already the prospective mother of Byron's child. All this was apparently unknown to the Shelleys at the time they left for Switzerland.

Various causes urged Shelley and his family to quit England for the second time in 1818. Shelley's health, never very robust—frequently, indeed, presenting alarming symptoms suggestive of consumption—was in a very failing state. His ailments would no doubt to-day be largely laid to the count of neurasthenia or "nervous breakdown," principally the results of the disquieting incidents and afflictions of the close of 1816 and the early months of 1817. The English climate and the constant worry of money affairs (rather Godwin's and his friends' than his own) also played their part. And besides, there was the grave consideration—constantly urged by Mary—of how best to dispose of Byron's little

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daughter Allegra (born in Bath on 12 January, 1817), whose existence was being explained in more or less unsatisfactory manner, and who was of course the object of much gossip and tittle-tattle, and the innocent source of calumny on Shelley himself.

Shelley sailed from Dover, accompanied by his wife, their two children, William (born 24 January, 1816) and Clara (born 3 September, 1817); Claire Clairmont, Allegra, the Swiss nurse Elise, and an English nursemaid.

CHAPTER II

ARRIVAL IN ITALY—MILAN—SOCIAL AND POLITICAL STATE OF THE COUNTRY—FIRST IMPRESSIONS—ALLEGRA BYRON

“**N**O sooner had we arrived at Italy than the loveliness of the earth and the serenity of the sky made the greatest difference in my sensations. I depend on these things for life.”

Thus Shelley, in a letter from Milan to his friend Thomas Love Peacock, briefly sums up his first impression of Italy. He had travelled through France, sullen and exhausted after the recent wars ; through winter, “abominable weather,” and mountain snows, into a land of verdant fields, blossoming fruit-trees, and glorious blue skies, and rejoiced in “the clear and complete language of Italy” after what he terms the “nasal and abbreviated cacophony of the French.”

From Susá the party proceeded to Turin, where they stayed a day, spending the evening at the opera. Milan was reached on the evening of the 4th April, and here they passed the remainder of the month, with the exception of a couple of days which Shelley and Mary spent house-hunting near Como, their design being to settle for the summer on the shores of that lake. Shelley wrote with the greatest enthusiasm of the magnificent scenery round Como,

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which he declared exceeded in beauty anything he had ever beheld, with the exception of the arbutus islands of Killarney. But the visit to Como, though fruitful of delightful impressions, was sterile of practical results, and though many houses were looked at and admired by the poet, none could be secured for his purpose.

On the 12th April Shelley and Mary were back in Milan. Of Milan itself Shelley had little to say, though he speaks with enthusiasm of the wonderful cathedral. "The effect of it," he writes to Peacock, "piercing the solid blue with those groups of dazzling spires, relieved by the serene depth of this Italian heaven, or by moonlight when the stars seem gathered among those clustered shapes, is beyond anything I had imagined architecture capable of producing." The interior, which he likens to "some gorgeous sepulchre," he finds of a more earthly character; but one solitary spot among the aisles, behind the altar, appealed to him particularly as a quiet corner in which he could settle to read Dante.

The ninety years which have gone by since Shelley sojourned in Lombardy, the heroic struggles with which that people shook off the cursed Austrian yoke and won their title to freedom and nationality, and the fifty years of Italian Unity which have followed on this and the other uprisings throughout the peninsula, have no doubt wrought an incomputable change in the life and the temper of the people, and it is not easy for us of this later generation to realize the character of the country in Shelley's time: that disunited, maimed, and apparently inanimate body whose scattered members were Austrian Lombardy and Venetia, the Grand

Duchy of Tuscany, the Duchies of Parma and Modena, and the small Principality of Lucca (all under direct Austrian influence); the Papal States, with Rome as capital, where Austria still reigned supreme through the veil of the Pope's temporal power; the Kingdom of Naples and Sicily, under the renewed despotic rule of King Ferdinand; and—the blind nucleus of the future United Italy—the Kingdom of Sardinia, which included Piedmont and Savoy, Nice, and the Genoese coast.

No doubt a people so disunited, and which had so long suffered the misgovernment and spoliation of so many foreign rulers, in this period of lethargy which preceded the mighty efforts of the coming years, was degraded, servile, lacking in public spirit—what public spirit indeed could there be where public life and interests were non-existent?—and wanting in energy and dignity. The name of Italy and the language alone endured; but from a language and a name a nation was yet to rise. It was no dead, albeit a sleeping, nation which had so recently cradled a Mazzini and a Garibaldi—and where Leopardi at that moment lived and wrote. It is, indeed, worth recording that in the autumn of this same year 1818—the first year of Shelley's residence in Italy—Leopardi wrote his magnificent ode "*All' Italia*," in which he deplores the abject condition of his country "that wast once mistress, and now art serving-maid."

In this downtrodden, lethargic, and apparently dormant body Shelley could discern little but a putrescent corpse. The Neapolitan insurrection of 1820 alone roused his hopes and song on its behalf. But Byron, who lived more among the Italians, and

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who saw more of their life and struggles, had a clearer judgment and brighter hopes for them. In his poetry Byron reveals at times a passionate love of Italy, as, for instance, in the IVth Canto of "Childe Harold" and the "Prophecy of Dante"; in nearly all his writings he displays liking and sympathy—though, of course, he at times contradicted or qualified these sentiments.

Throughout his four years' life in Italy, Shelley mixed little with Italians or Italian society, a fact partly attributable to his innate dislike of mixed company altogether. It must, however, always be borne in mind that Italian society in those days had no solid foundation to rest on, though there were local coteries and much glitter of festivity in parts, as in Venice and in Papal Rome, where the priests kept the people entertained that they might not pause and think too much, and in Austrian Milan. There were plenty of clever and brilliant men, and fascinating, witty, and beautiful women; there were salons, and *conversazioni*, and society functions, and operas and theatres—but the ground on which all these festivities were held was a thin and brittle crust trembling over an abyss. It was a society built neither on patriotism, nor honour, nor national customs, nor, indeed, on any sense of nationality; a society where the foreign oppressor, the spy, and the mercenary reigned, and where the natives amused themselves carelessly and often with little dignity. What reality of life could there be in all this—what solidity of thought and erudition—what morality? It was not a time when Italians of real worth could figure in society: they were better occupied fighting or conspiring to fight. Byron threw himself into

the vortex of shallow amusement at Venice ; but he suffered for it, and came out nauseated and hating Venice. Later on he found the duller provincial society of Ravenna more to his taste, because there it had ceased to revel and begun to think, split in two hostile camps.

It is curious to compare the early Italian impressions of the two English poets, which they both received in the first instance in Milan.

On the 15th October, 1816, Byron wrote to his publisher, John Murray, from that city, expressing much appreciation of the country and the people : " Milan is striking—the cathedral superb. . . . The Italians I have encountered here are very intelligent and agreeable. In a few days I am to meet Monti." Stendhal describes Byron's enthusiasm and delight when, one evening at dinner with the Marquis de Brême, Monti recited the first Canto of his "*Mascheroniana*." But he adds that on learning that Monti "was a man inconsistent in his politics" Byron's sympathy for him ceased, whereas "his esteem and sympathy for Silvio Pellico, for Manzoni, and for many other Italians remained perfectly unshaken."

Again Byron writes to Murray : " We found Milan very polite and hospitable, and have the same hopes of Verona and Venice " ; and to Moore he writes from Verona (6 November, 1816) that at Milan he lived much with the Italians, and found the Marquis de Brême and his family very " able and intelligent men." In this same letter, however, he speaks of the laxity of morals which he observed there with something actually approaching dismay—a condition of things which struck him later on in Venice and

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Ravenna not altogether disagreeably. He also refers to the beauty of the Lombardy peasant girls.

Shelley, during his brief sojourn in Lombardy, came little into personal contact with the Italians. In the first of his letters to Peacock he speaks with enthusiasm of the "ballet, or rather a kind of melodrama, or pantomimic drama" which they witnessed after the Opera of Othello, as the "most splendid spectacle" he ever saw.¹ And Shelley speaks well also of the bread (truly the poet's staff of life, and a matter of no small consequence to him) as the whitest and best he ever tasted, and of the cleanliness and comfort of the inns ; and of the beautiful cultivation of the land ! But of the people? . . .

Surely, though there may have been some truth in his impression, he was yet not a little blinded by his preconceived notion of what a downtrodden and oppressed populace ought to look like. Certainly he confesses that "we do not *know*" (the italics are mine) "a single human being here." He continues : "The people here, though inoffensive enough, seem both in body and soul a miserable race. The men are hardly men ; they look like a tribe of stupid and shrivelled slaves [a phrase which Shelley borrows from his correspondent's romance, "Nightmare Abbey"], and I do not think that I have seen a gleam of intelligence in the countenance of man since I passed the Alps."

While recording Shelley's hasty and exaggerated impression of the Milanese for what it is worth, it

¹ Claire expresses equal enthusiasm for Maria Pallerini, who played Desdemona. "Her walk is more like the sweepings of the wind than the steps of a mortal," she writes in her diary, "and her attitudes are like pictures."

is interesting to note the impression of another Englishman, William Stewart Rose, the translator of Ariosto, who travelled in the North of Italy, in 1817, and whose interesting and sympathetic little volume describing his travels Byron, among others, held in considerable esteem. Rose remained several months in and about Lombardy and Venetia, and in general his impression of the Italians is reasonable, unprejudiced, and fair. Of the Milanese, however, while he recognizes their honesty, sobriety, and industry, he writes : "I never saw such a number of deformed and diminutive wretches in any city in Europe"; and he declares them to be behind all other Italians in mental qualifications, being generally heavy and slow of understanding. If we compare this, and Shelley's observations, with Mrs. Piozzi's impression thirty years earlier, when the "cottagers of Lombardy" figure as "that handsome, hardy race, bright in their expression and muscular in their strength"—one really begins to question whether long continuance of foreign tyranny were not actually degenerating the physique of the race. Both Shelley and Rose, however, refer more especially to the town dwellers.

Mrs. Shelley affirmed that "these impressions of Shelley with regard to the Italians, formed in ignorance, and with precipitation, became altogether altered after a longer stay in Italy. He quickly discovered the extraordinary intelligence and genius of this wonderful people, amidst the ignorance in which they are carefully kept by their rulers, and the vices fostered by a religious system which these same rulers have used as their most successful engine."

One would fain accept, without questioning it,

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Mary Shelley's statement, in which there must certainly have been a strong element of truth ; but, as Mr. Rossetti very properly pointed out in his Memoir of the poet, there is also much evidence to the contrary. Byron, too, in his later letters, often abuses the Italians, but it is generally the abuse of a friend and a lover, one whose very intimacy and sympathy render him apt to find fault and quarrel. With regard to Byron, it must, moreover, be borne in mind that the conditions of his life during a considerable portion of his sojourn in Venice—for which the Italians were not exactly responsible—were not of a kind to show him the best side of the Venetians, nor to leave him a particularly pleasant memory. Neither Shelley nor Byron, perhaps, fully understood the Italian temperament, nor the new life which was beginning to germinate from beneath the ruins, and both the English poets must doubtless have been regarded as somewhat mad—each in his degree—by the ordinary Italian with whom they came in contact ; but Byron's "madness" was of a less exotic type, and more comprehensible.

Shelley's first experience of the narrow-minded religious censorship exercised in the Kingdom of Sardinia cannot have tended to prejudice him in favour of the Italians. At the Savoy frontier his beloved books were investigated and disapproved of ; indeed, they ran imminent risk of being confiscated and burnt, but were happily saved from this fate by a canon who had met Sir Timothy Shelley at the house of the Catholic Duke of Norfolk, and who fortunately chanced to be present. For once the unimpeachable respectability of Sir Timothy stood his son in good stead ! Eventually the books were returned, unharmed, to Shelley at the Bagni di Lucca.

This was not the only occasion during his first days in Italy that Shelley came into conflict with the authorities, though his second adventure, as described in her journal by Claire Clairmont, was altogether amusing and innocuous. During his brief sojourn at Como, Shelley took a walk to some solitary spot where he might, unmolested, discharge the loaded pistol he had carried with him during his travels. Two police-officers, however, suspecting his intentions, followed him, and in spite of his protests, arrested him and took him before the Prefect. By this gentleman, however, he was treated with much courtesy and instantly released, the pistol —after Mrs. Shelley's assurance had been obtained that her husband had no intention of discharging it into his own head—being duly returned to him.

Before leaving Milan on the first of the following month, Claire, on the 28th April, took the fatal step of returning to Byron his illegitimate child, the little Allegra, of whom her mother had in the first fifteen months of the infant's life naturally grown very fond. This step, though perhaps worldly prudence counselled it, was fraught with danger and sorrow. Claire's motive was to avoid scandal to herself (and also no doubt to Mary and to Shelley, whose most brotherly and generous treatment of Claire brought down on him the suspicions and slanders of his garbage-loving contemporaries), and also the consideration that, as the recognized daughter of a wealthy and famous nobleman, little Allegra would have a better prospect of success in life. At this period Claire was no doubt unable to realize the degree of indifference—already amounting to positive dislike—with which her former lover regarded her-

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self. But Byron, at worst, was at least sincere in his passions, and can scarcely have feigned a depth of feeling for Claire which he never, at any period of their acquaintance and intimacy, felt. From Geneva he had written to Augusta Leigh, alluding to his intrigue with Claire, of which some distorted report had already apparently reached her : "I was not in love, nor have any love left for any ; but I could not exactly play the Stoic with a woman, who had scrambled eight hundred miles to unphilosophize me. Besides . . . I was fain to take a little love (if pressed particularly) by way of novelty." But while ready enough to take the love, he was not at all ready to take any reproaches for it later on.

Shelley, who, despite his idealism and indifference to many worldly concerns, possessed withal the practical and clear-eyed insight of the man of genius, which so often sees farther and more clearly into the problems of every-day and any-day life than do his fellows—their vision obfuscated by petty considerations and prejudices—seems alone to have foreseen and warned Claire of the danger she was incurring. The burden of Allegra had hitherto fallen on him, but he was not the man to shirk such a burden, or to care much for the world's spiteful interpretation and comment. Later on, when Claire's heart and mouth were full of bitter reproaches to Lord Byron, and when she was ready to attempt any wild and impossible plan to get a sight of her child, Shelley, then counselling unavoidable prudence and patience, wrote to her : "Remember, Claire, when you rejected my earnest advice, and checked me with that contempt which I have never merited from you, at Milan, and how vain is now your regret ! "

Indirectly Claire had received other warnings of the danger which threatened her in parting with her child, and entrusting it to the care of its father. Byron had already refused to correspond directly with her—no promising token of his goodwill and amenity ; on the 21st April a "letter from Albè" (Lord Byron)—apparently addressed to Shelley—contained "nothing but discomfort," and on the 24th of that month Shelley encountered at the Milan post-office a Venetian, who regaled him with "no agreeable news of Albè" ; news which must have consisted of a *chronique* more or less *scandaleuse* of the dissolute life Byron was then leading in Venice.

But, on the other hand, in excuse and explanation of Claire's ill-advised act, it must be remembered that the entire journey to Italy was in a measure undertaken for this purpose ; and that Mary Shelley—who was not so indifferent to the world's tongue as her husband was, nor possibly quite so indifferent to the burden of extra trouble and expense—had long favoured this step as the only proper means of providing for the child ; and poor Claire herself was in a position of dependence and uncertainty, with no means whatsoever of her own. But beyond such considerations, it must also be borne in mind that Claire Clairmont, together with much unconventional rashness and boldness of character and enterprise, united a very human, but somewhat illogical, desire to stand well with the world. The presence of her child was a blot on her worldly fame.

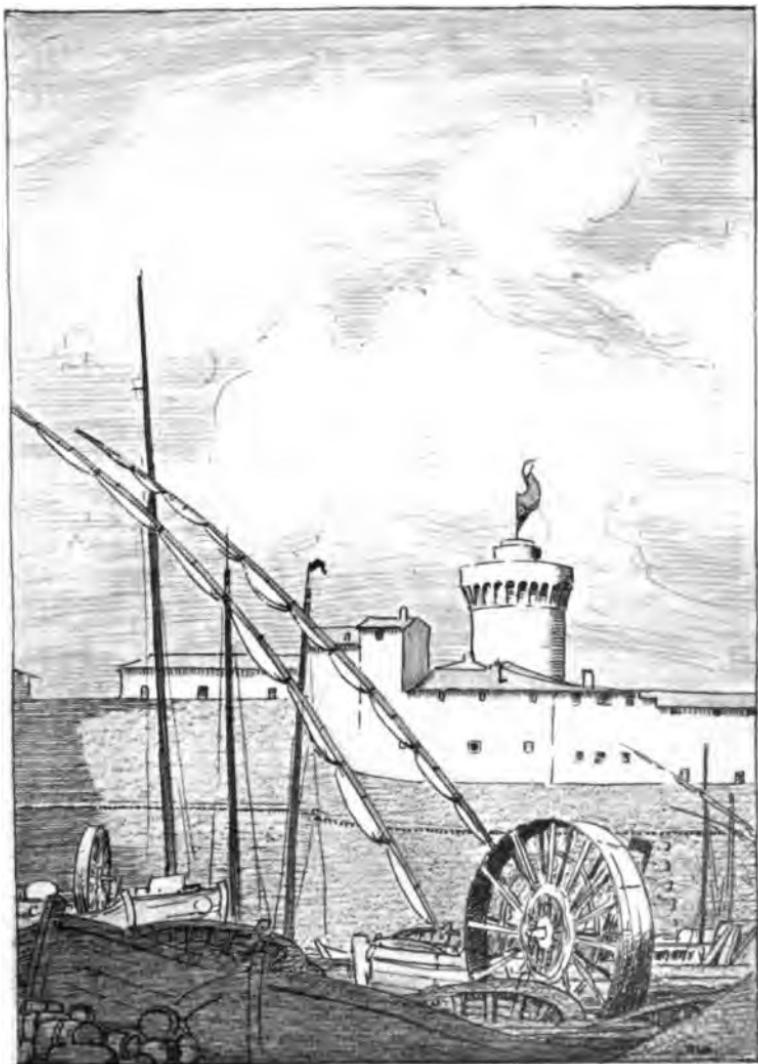
Thus on the 28th April, 1818, little Allegra Byron, accompanied by the Swiss nurse Elise, whom Mary kindly sacrificed for her quasi-sister's child, was sent to the care of her father in Venice.

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CHAPTER III

LEGHORN AND THE BAGNI DI LUCCA—THE GISBORNES—ITALIAN STUDIES—FIRST WORK IN ITALY—ALLEGRA—SHELLEY AND CLAIRE LEAVE FOR VENICE

THREE days after parting with Allegra, Shelley and his party left Milan *en route* for Leghorn, passing through Piacenza, Parma, Modena, and Bologna ; and then crossing the Apennines to Pisa. Claire gives in her journal a fairly detailed account of this journey and of the impression made on her by the scenery they passed through, and speaks with wonder and admiration of the luxurious fertility of the country between Milan and Bologna. Then after crossing the Apennines, the scenery of which she contrasts with that of the Alps, noting the greater breadth of the prospects, she speaks again of the fertility of the southern side of the range, the beauty of the banks of the Arno, and the more prosperous appearance of the peasants and their families. Shelley writes to Peacock from Leghorn (5 June, 1818) : " This part of the Apennines is far less beautiful than the Alps ; the mountains are wide and wild, and the whole scenery broad and undetermined—the imagination cannot find a home in it. The Plain of the Milanese, and that of Parma,



INNER HARBOUR, LIVORNO

is exquisitely beautiful—it is like one garden, or rather cultivated wilderness ; because the corn and the meadow-grass grow under high and thick trees, festooned to one another by regular festoons of vines. On the seventh day we arrived at Pisa, where we remained three or four days. A large, disagreeable city, almost without inhabitants."

Such was Shelley's first rapid impression of the ancient Tuscan city in which he was eventually destined to make his home for a longer period than he ever sojourned in any other place since the doors of his paternal home had been closed against him.

During the brief stay in Pisa—where they put up at the Albergo of the Tre Donzelle, on the Lung' Arno—news reached the party from Elise of her safe arrival in Venice with her little charge, and, after visiting the cathedral and the Leaning Tower, they left a city which the whole party—partly on account of its deserted and lifeless aspect, and partly through the distressing presence of chained convicts cleaning the streets—found uncongenial and depressing.

On the 9th May the Shelleys and Claire reached Leghorn. Leghorn seems to have borne much the same character ninety years ago as it does to-day : a busy commercial seaport, cosmopolitan in all things but the tourist, who finds scant attraction there—which is a point decidedly in its favour—less beautiful than most other Italian towns, much frequented in summer as a bathing resort by the Tuscans, chiefly desirable for its sea and its sky and the charming and fertile coast country that surrounds it." But to the Shelleys, and more especially to Mary,

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it held one great attraction which compensated for many deficiencies, the presence there of Maria Gisborne with her husband and her son Henry Reveley, to whom they came with an introduction from William Godwin.

Mary herself could hardly remember Mrs. Reveley, the friend of her mother, to whom Mary Wollstonecraft had written one of her last letters, shortly before the birth—fatal to herself—of her daughter, to whose expected advent as little "William" the mother playfully refers in her letter to her friend. When Mary, eleven days after her birth, was left an orphan by the death of her mother, Maria Reveley took the baby to her own house and care for a time.

Maria Gisborne was a woman of no common ability and attainments, and will ever be remembered as the recipient of Shelley's admirable versified letter. She was born in 1770, and her early years were spent between London and Constantinople, where her father, Mr. James, lived apart from his wife as a merchant. She early showed talent both for music and painting, and received a good, unconventional education. While still quite a young girl Miss James accompanied her father to Rome, where she met and married an English architect, Mr. Willey Reveley, with whom she returned to England. Mr. James refused his consent to this marriage, and gave his daughter no fortune. So far as I know, father and daughter were completely alienated after this, although in 1820 Maria heard that the old gentleman was still alive and in excellent health in his eighty-seventh year. "May he never feel remorse, but live through this last portion of his existence in peace!" she then wrote; "I would

not disturb him, I would not have him suffer pain on my account."¹

Mary Shelley says of Mrs. Reveley that at this time she was "very young and very beautiful, and she possessed a peculiar charm of character in her deep sensibility, and an ingenuous modesty that knew no guile ; this was added to ardour in the pursuit of knowledge, a liberal and unquenchable curiosity."

On the 6th July, 1799, Mr. Reveley suddenly died from blood-vessels breaking on the brain. His widow's very natural state of affliction at this unexpected bereavement afforded William Godwin an excellent opportunity for prolonged argument ; a month after her husband's death he tried long and earnestly to persuade her that the reasonable and proper course for her to pursue was to marry himself. This suggestion Mrs. Reveley firmly and strenuously refused to accede to.

A year later Mrs. Reveley married Mr. John Gisborne, a gentleman three years her junior, born, as appears from his horoscope, at 10.30 p.m. on the 6th September, 1773. Mr. Gisborne, though an unsuccessful merchant, appears to have been an estimable, well-meaning, and sensible, if not a brilliant, man ; who, while Shelley evidently regarded him with some degree of good-natured ridicule—most unusual on his part—nurtured the warmest and most enthusiastic affection for the poet, as shown in his diary at a date subsequent to Shelley's death. Peacock, moreover, who met him in 1820, defends poor Gisborne against Shelley's imputations of dullness and stupidity. "I found Mr. Gisborne an agreeable and well-informed man," he writes,

¹ Journal, 1820—in the possession of Mr. Buxton Forman.

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Shortly after their marriage Mr. and Mrs. Gisborne left England for Rome, accompanied by Henry, Mrs. Gisborne's son by her first marriage. Eight years were passed between Rome and Pisa ; at the university of the latter city young Reveley distinguished himself considerably in his scientific studies, and chose the profession of a civil engineer. He encountered, however, scarcely better success as an engineer than his stepfather had done as a merchant ; his attempts to obtain employment in Italy proved as unsuccessful as Mr. Gisborne's efforts to resume a mercantile career or to obtain a vice-consulship in Leghorn. But, undiscouraged by previous failure, Henry Reveley was, when the Shelleys became acquainted with him and his family in Leghorn, as intent as ever on mechanical inventions and improvements. Shelley describes his workshop in 1820 in the "Letter to Maria Gisborne" :

"For round the walls are hung dread engines, such
As Vulcan never wrought for Jove to clutch
Ixion or the Titan . . .
. . . And other strange and dread
Magical forms the brick-floor overspread,—
Proteus transformed to metal did not make
More figures or more strange ; nor did he take
Such shapes of unintelligible brass,
Or heap himself in such a horrid mass
Of tin and iron not to be understood ;
And forms of unimaginable wood. . . ."

Some flicker of Shelley's long dead, or dormant, scientific enthusiasm, which was devoted principally to chemistry in his Oxford days, where his rooms

were an unimaginable chaos of electrical machines, air-pumps, galvanic troughs, glass jars and receivers, and phials innumerable, may have been fanned into evanescent being in the midst of his friend's motley confusion of steam-engines, bowls of quicksilver, mathematical instruments, and what not. But of Henry Reveley and his steam-engine more anon.

On May 9th Mary Shelley records in her diary : "Journey to Leghorn. After we arrive walk out. A stupid town. We see the Mediterranean. Read a French translation of Lucian. Mrs. Gisborne calls in the evening with her husband ; she is reserved, yet with easy manners."

During the month that the Shelleys remained in Leghorn they were in daily pleasant intercourse with the Gisborne family, who resided at Casa Ricci, in the neighbourhood. Mary heard from Mrs. Gisborne more about her own mother than she had probably ever heard from her uncommunicative parent, who was no doubt averse to disturbing philosophic serenity of mind by any talk or recollections likely to appeal too strongly to the affections. Mary wrote to him an account of her first interviews with his old friend, whom he had not seen now for close on twenty years. He answered with unusual warmth and cordiality : "I can hardly hope for so great a pleasure as it would be to me to see her again."

A brief visit to the Bagni di Lucca towards the close of May was followed, on 11th June, by the removal of Shelley and his family to the picturesque mountain village, then in much repute as a summer health resort—a change which was much appreciated for the quiet and the natural beauty of the scenery after the noise and tumult of the Via Grande in

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Leghorn. Mary writes to Mrs. Gisborne that, while she hardly heard the noise there, she felt the silence here as the return to something very delightful from which she had been long absent.

In Leghorn Mrs. Gisborne—"a very amiable and accomplished lady"—had been to Shelley the "sole attraction of this most unattractive of cities"—which her presence had, however, succeeded in rendering *even agreeable*. But in Leghorn, as elsewhere, his chief resource for comfort and company had been reading and study. At the Bagni di Lucca his beloved books which had been confiscated were returned to him from Chambéry, and in these he found the congenial company which was lacking among the English tourists, and the Italians *in villeggiatura*, casually encountered and carefully avoided at the local Casino. Shelley's letters from here are still full of abuse of the Italians—"a miserable people without sensibility, or imagination, or understanding," he writes to Godwin. "Their outside is polished, and an intercourse with them seems to proceed with much facility, though it ends in nothing, and produces nothing."

Mary writes to Mrs. Gisborne of a Signora Felichi, known to her correspondent in Pisa,¹ and of "speaking to one or two people at the Casino," and of morning and evening rides with Shelley in which Claire joined till a fall from her horse, and consequent injury to her knee, caused her to discontinue.

Both in Leghorn and the Bagni di Lucca, Shelley

¹ Signora Felichi was the then owner of the Lanfranchi Palace in Pisa, later on the residence of Lord Byron. .



DEVIL'S BRIDGE, BAGNI DI LUCCA

and Mary read Ariosto together, and they progressed in the study of Italian. On his arrival in Italy, Shelley can have possessed little practical knowledge of the language, though he had studied it in London with Hogg, and in 1813-14 with Madame de Boinville and her daughter Cornelia Turner, at which time he read Ariosto with enthusiasm, and Tasso and Petrarch. According to Hogg, he was then wont to speak of "the unparalleled poem [the "Orlando Furioso"] with wild rapture, and read aloud . . . detached passages with energy and enthusiastic delight." On the second reading of Ariosto, Shelley was no longer so enthusiastic. "We have finished Ariosto together," he writes to Peacock on the 25th July—"a thing I could not have done again alone."

Shelley read Dante for the first time in Milan, and throughout his life in Italy he became an ever more ardent student of the supreme Italian poet.

Besides Italian reading and study, Shelley read much Greek and some Latin in the Bagni di Lucca. He writes to Peacock that he was in the habit of reading Herodotus while seated naked on the rocks of a woodland torrent waiting to cool before leaping into the cold water for his daily bath. On her side Mary—ever studious in the midst of travel, domestic changes, upheavals, and discomforts, and the bearing, rearing, and dying of her children—read Livy. Shelley speaks at this time of present "despair of producing anything original," which caused him to occupy himself with the translation of Plato's "Symposium," a task which we learn, from a letter of Mary's, he completed in ten days.

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When he came to Italy in March, 1818, Shelley had attained the zenith of his powers and personality, though the richest fruits of his genius were yet to ripen under the southern sun. From Milan he wrote to Peacock that he had devoted his summer, and indeed the next year, "to the composition of a tragedy on the subject of Tasso's madness." He never carried out this project, however, and only two fragments remain to us of Shelley's first dramatic attempt.

It is little wonder that during these earliest months in Italy Shelley should have felt scant inspiration for original work. "*The Revolt of Islam*"—the crowning effort of his first mature period of poetic production, or perhaps it may be considered as the first step towards that yet vaster fulfilment of his genius which, in 1819, gave "*Prometheus Unbound*" to the world—represented a gigantic effort to a man weak, tormented, and ill in body, mentally oppressed, and suffering from the recent cruel blows of Fate. He had, indeed, at the time of its composition felt that this might be his last effort, and as such was determined on completing it. After its publication, he wrote (11 December, 1817) to Godwin: "I felt the precariousness of my life, and I engaged in this task, resolved to leave some record of myself." His health was such at that time that he scarcely expected to live, and the journey to Italy was, as already stated, partly, if not principally, undertaken as a matter of prudence or necessity on this account. When Italy was reached, and some degree of repose from travelling ensued, Shelley's health and spirits began to revive under the genial southern sun and skies, but it was some

time before he re-entered into full possession of his poetic inspiration.

At the Bagni, by taking advantage of a few days of inspiration, Shelley finished the poem of "Rosalind and Helen," begun at Marlow—a poem describing the imaginary experiences of two women friends, one of whom unwittingly loved her own half-brother, and dealing with the problems of love and the injustice and cruelty of man and prejudice—a poem of very slight human interest, though containing some beautiful passages; sentimental and unconvincing as a whole.

Shelley's admirable and eloquent translation of Plato's "Symposium" was followed by an essay, never completed, "upon the causes of some differences in sentiment between the Ancients and Moderns with respect to the subject of the dialogue"—"a subject," as he wrote to Peacock in his letter of the 16th August, "to be handled with that delicate caution which either I cannot or I will not practise in other matters, but which here I acknowledge to be necessary." It is deeply to be regretted that Shelley never finished this most interesting and valuable study on a subject which he was so pre-eminently fitted to treat both with the necessary candour and the requisite delicacy; unfortunately, his essay, as Mary Shelley says in her note thereto, "breaks off at the moment when the main subject is about to be discussed."

While Shelley was thus occupied, and the placid Mary held on with her studies and readings, poor Claire, who had scant pretensions to philosophy at the best of times, was anxious and pining for a sight of her little child.

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Allegra did not long remain a member of Byron's strange ménage, having been handed over to the care of Mrs. Hoppner, a Swiss lady, wife of the English Consul-General in Venice. This news was conveyed to Claire in letters from Elise of the 14th and 16th August, which were the immediate cause of her deciding to set out with Shelley for Venice on the 19th of the month. On the 3rd August Byron had written to his sister, Mrs. Leigh : "My little girl, Allegra, . . . has been with me these three months : she is very pretty, remarkably intelligent, and a great favourite with everybody ; but what is remarkable much more like Lady Byron than her mother—so much as to stupefy the learned Fletcher and astonish me. . . . She has very blue eyes, and that singular forehead, fair curly hair, and a devil of a spirit—but that is Papa's." This curious resemblance to Lady Byron is most noticeably striking in a miniature of Allegra (now in the possession of Mr. Buxton Forman), which represents the little girl at the age of about four, standing by a table with a basket of flowers. This portrait does not show Allegra to have been as pretty as I should have expected from some descriptions ; but bright and vivacious, and remarkably like Lady Byron in the miniature portrait painted by Charles Hayter in 1812.

On the 20th August, Shelley and Claire reached Florence, and after taking a first glance at the city, the beauty of which delighted Shelley, they set out for Padua, which they reached after two days' more travel, proceeding thence by gondola to Venice. Knowing how unwelcome her presence would prove to Byron, Claire at first proposed remaining alone

in Padua while Shelley interviewed him in Venice on her behalf, but the solitariness and strangeness of Padua, and the dirtiness of the beds there, induced her to alter her plans.

CHAPTER IV.

LORD BYRON IN VENICE—RE-MEETING WITH SHELLEY—"I CAPPUCCHINI"—DEATH OF CLARA SHELLEY—BETWEEN ESTE AND VENICE

ON the road, or more correctly on the canal, between Padua and Venice, Shelley and Claire were regaled by the gondolier, who happened to be one of Lord Byron's, with the wild tales which were afloat among the *basso popolo* of Venice concerning the reckless life and habits pursued by the English poet ; and on arriving at the inn they were assailed by the waiter with a fresh batch of scandal concerning their friend, who was indeed in Venice, as everywhere else, the centre of popular curiosity.

Byron was never over-careful of comment or censure, though he was at bottom far from unsensitive towards it ; in this respect differing from Shelley, who was truly indifferent, not defiant. Byron's pride, which alone was stronger than his sensibility, urged him to conceal this sentiment by an appearance of indifference or contempt—indeed, to rebel openly against those rules of conduct, or concealment of conduct, laid down by society for the prevention or regulation of its vices. He was not the man to weep or reform under the stinging blows dealt him by the society whose decorum and morals he had outraged, even when these blows may

have occasionally brought the tears to his eyes. The world—*his* world—having once given him up and cast him aside as a bad job, he was well of a temper to give it better cause for its judgment. He was determined to show it how far this ostracism from its midst had broken the spirit of the prodigal.

By nature deeply affectionate, and loyal in his affections, if not in his passions, Lord Byron, rightly or wrongly, judged that he had throughout his life been hardly used by his fellows and by Fate—from his lameness, his mother, his early love and earliest passions to his marriage, and the friends, flatterers, and deserters of his maturity. This conviction, which at twenty-one found expression in the blending of bitter pride and sentimental melancholy of the first and second cantos of "Childe Harold," and which later found a more virile voice in the defiant improprieties of "Don Juan," caused him, during the first years of his residence in Italy, to plunge recklessly into excess and libertinage—partly the natural vent of his unruly passions, but also in large measure attributable to a spirit of defiance.

In March, 1817, Byron learned that his daughter Ada had been made a ward in Chancery without his knowledge or consent, and he seems then to have finally realized that all idea of reconciliation with Lady Byron, which for a time he had cherished, must be abandoned; and from that moment his plans for returning to England grew feebler, and less definite and substantial. Nothing more bound him to England or to his old life and connections. No one need care how irregular his life became. From the latter end of 1817 to April, 1819, when he became acquainted with the Countess Teresa

Guiccioli, was the period of his most promiscuous excesses.

Tom Moore in his biography is not reticent about this period of Byron's life; and it is impossible to read without a smile the pious little dose of English cant with which he prefaces the introduction of his readers to the scene of the poet's improprieties—"affairs of gallantry"—abroad, after dilating on "that peculiar sense of decorum in this country" which did not allow him to mention any such matters before the latter end of 1816. How Byron would have smiled at his amiable friend's cant, when he remembered the morals in vogue in the English society of his day, especially if he had recalled a certain evening spent in his box in Covent Garden in December, 1813, which is recorded in his journal, when the fashionably thronged house appeared to be "divided between your public and your understood courtesans"—the latter considerably in the majority.

Of England and the English Byron constantly wrote with the keenest distaste and dislike, as, for instance, on returning from Rome, when he assured Murray that only an earthquake or a "good real eruption of Vesuvius" could reconcile him to their company, and later (June, 1818) he writes: "I hate the country, and like this." In his letters to Murray, written with the knowledge that they would be read by the publisher's friends and the literary coterie of Albemarle Street, Byron delighted in dwelling on his improprieties and painting himself as a very bad lot. In the midst of directions to his publisher in regard to his poems, he describes his promiscuous love-making and the indecent witticisms of the Venetian courtesans with whom he consorted.

That his life at this period and the low companions he selected for himself must have been at times highly distasteful, and even painful, to so sensitive a man as Byron is amply evident ; indeed, Moore tells us that during this period of dissipation, when his house was full of such company, "he was known to hurry away in his gondola and pass the greater part of the night upon the water, as if hating to return to his home"—and later on he conceived a positive loathing of this period, to which his subsequent abuse of Venice can fairly be attributed.

In spite of the pandemonium in which he lived, Byron contrived to do some of his best work in Venice ; and, however much he may have suffered in person, and in some degree in character, at this time, he was never more keen or productive intellectually. It was during the first two years of his residence in Italy that he finished "Manfred," wrote the "Lament of Tasso," "Beppo," and the IVth Canto of "Childe Harold," "Mazeppa," and the first Canto of his supreme masterpiece "Don Juan." Indeed, "Beppo" and "Don Juan" would never, in all likelihood, have been produced but for this period of excess. It behoves us, therefore, to accept, rather than to criticise or condemn.

Shelley and Claire arrived in Venice in the early morning of Sunday, the 23rd August, and after breakfast they repaired by boat to the house of the Hoppners, where they made the acquaintance of the English Consul and his Swiss wife—"a most agreeable and amiable lady" with "hazel eyes and sweet looks—quite Maryish" so Shelley wrote. Little Allegra soon put in an appearance, much grown, though paler and less lively, "but as beautiful as

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ever, though more mild." The Hoppners, who entered into the matter with the most friendly zeal, advised keeping Claire's presence in Venice a secret from Lord Byron, as he often expressed extreme horror at the idea of her arrival. At three o'clock Shelley called on Byron, who was delighted to see him, and discussed in the most amiable and conciliatory spirit the question of Allegra and Claire. He was unwilling, however, to send the child away for any long period, because the Venetians would think he had grown tired of her, and he had already "the reputation for caprice." In the end, however, he consented to send Allegra for a week to Claire in Padua. "In fact," he added, "after all I have no right over the child. If Claire likes to take it, let her take it. I do not say what most people would in that situation, that I will refuse to provide for it, or abandon it, if she does this ; but she must surely be aware herself how very imprudent such a measure would be." This talk at an end, Byron took Shelley in his gondola across the lagoon "to a long, sandy island which defends Venice from the Adriatic. When we disembarked," Shelley writes to his wife, "we found his horses waiting for us, and we rode along the sands of the sea, talking. Our conversation consisted in histories of his wounded feelings, and questions as to my affairs, and great professions of friendship and regard for me. . . . We talked of literary matters : his Fourth Canto, which he says is very good, and indeed repeated some stanzas of great energy to me ; and 'Foliage' [Leigh Hunt's recent volume of verse], which he quizzes immoderately. . . ."

During the absence of Shelley and Claire from the

Bagni di Lucca, Mary, who felt lonely in solitude, had persuaded Mr. and Mrs. Gisborne to join her there as her guests, on the 25th August ; but unconscious of her arrangements, and anxious to propitiate Byron while he was in so gracious and amenable a mood, Shelley proceeds in this letter to urge Mary to pack up with all haste, and travel with her children, servants, and household gods to Este, where Byron (who believed them all, including Claire, to be in Padua) had offered to lend them a villa, "I Cappuccini," rented some months previously by himself from Hoppner. Here he was willing to send Allegra to her mother's care for a short time.

This villa, where the Shelleys sojourned for several weeks, was a large, commodious house, beautifully situated among the Euganean Hills, amid luxuriant vines and plantations of fruit-trees, close to the old Castle of the Estes, or Guelphs, and within a few miles of Arquà, where Petrarch's house and tomb were a point of interest. "At the end of our garden," Shelley wrote to Peacock, "is an extensive Gothic castle, now the habitation of owls and bats, where the Medici family resided before they came to Florence. We see before us the wide, flat plains of Lombardy, in which we see the sun and moon rise and set, and the evening star, and all the golden magnificence of autumnal clouds."

Mary set out from the Bagni di Lucca with her children and other properties on the 1st September, and after a long and tedious journey, and a delay of twenty-four hours at Florence, reached Este, with the poor baby Clara very ill, on the 5th. Shelley and Claire were awaiting her arrival. It was during the early days of waiting and suspense at

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"I Cappuccini" that Shelley wrote the fragment of verse addressed to Mary, beginning :

"Oh ! Mary dear, that you were here !
With your brown eyes bright and clear. . . ."

Mary in her journal thus records her arrival :

"Sept. 5. Arrive at Este. Poor Clara is dangerously ill. Shelley is very unwell from taking poison in Italian cakes. He writes his drama of Prometheus. Read seven cantos of Dante."

Neither Shelley nor Claire was well, and on the 22nd they went to Padua to consult the physician, and Shelley, with his usual rapidity of action, proceeded to Venice the same day, where he intended making arrangements for receiving Mary and little Clara, there to obtain "some reasonable person's advice for the little one." On the 24th he was back in Padua to receive Mary and his child (who had been accompanied so far by Claire); but by this time the poor infant was in a desperate condition. Shelley's impetuosity got them past the Dogana without a passport, but a sterner opponent awaited them in Venice. Little "Ca," for whom the many disturbances and journeyings had proved too much, died in her mother's arms about an hour after their arrival at the inn, before Dr. Aglietti—the doctor whom Byron held in such high esteem, and whom Shelley had rushed off to fetch—could see her.

Four days were spent in Venice, under the roof of the Hoppners, who, with kind consideration and hospitality, insisted that Shelley should bring Mary to their house immediately after her bereavement—"a

kindness I should have hesitated to accept," Shelley wrote to Claire on the 25th, "but that this unexpected stroke reduced Mary to a kind of despair. She is better to-day."

Mary, indeed, after her first moments of dismay, appears to have taken this loss with her normal philosophy ; she and Shelley saw something of Byron, whom they tried to persuade to grant Claire a longer time with her child ; read his IVth Canto of "Childe Harold," visited the Doge's Palace, the Ponte dei Sospiri, and the Accademia. On the 29th they were back in Este, where Claire and the two children, who on that day were in Padua, joined them on the morrow.

The vicinity of Venice, with Byron and the hospitable Hoppners, was a constant attraction to the Shelleys while in Este ; and on the 12th October Shelley and Mary returned to the wonderful city, and remained there till close on the end of the month. On the occasion of this visit the younger poet saw a great deal of Byron, and of the life he was then leading. His earlier impression of his friend was very favourable, gathered when he first went to Venice in August, and when Byron, no doubt, in the first moments of pleasure experienced on re-encountering one who had proved such an agreeable and stimulating companion in Geneva, showed only his more agreeable side, and was much taken out of himself, or rather out of the unworthy life and *milieu* he was then steeped in, and thrown from it into his better and truer self. "I saw Lord Byron," Shelley wrote to Peacock on the 8th October, "and really hardly knew him again ; he is changed into the liveliest and happiest-looking man I ever met. He

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read me the first canto of his 'Don Juan'—a thing in the style of 'Beppo,' but infinitely better. . . ." In speaking of Venice in this same letter, he writes in no measured terms of disgust, as for instance : " I had no conception of the excess to which avarice, cowardice, superstition, ignorance, passionless lust, and all the inexpressible brutalities which degrade human nature, could be carried, until I had passed a few days in Venice"; and what he had seen of Venice which so disgusted him must, in all likelihood, have been seen in the company of Lord Byron ; but of Byron himself he speaks in quite other terms in his letters both to Mary and to Peacock. Yet in writing to the latter from Naples on the 22nd December, he speaks in scathing terms of what he saw of Byron in Venice ; also with unaccountable vehemence against the general tone of the IVth Canto of " Childe Harold."

Referring to this period of Byron's life and to what Shelley wrote on the subject, Lord Lovelace writes in a note to his "Astarte" : "Lord Byron's conversation at Venice, as described to me from oral tradition, was very daring and bitter, with a note of forced jocularity, but there were many grossly exaggerated reports of his excesses. Trustworthy contemporary information from Venice, dating from the first half of the nineteenth century, disposes completely of the most repulsive abominations. There was no foundation for the crass and egregious suggestions of Shelley in a letter to Peacock, which became a favourite quotation for credulous ill-wishers. Shelley's good faith was probably imposed upon by Jane [Claire] Clairmont, who had been prowling about with him in the neighbourhood of Venice at the time, and,

like other spies, was quite capable of passing off her own inventions as information picked up." Some considerable degree of probability is lent to this statement of Byron's grandson—which we are fain to believe true—by the fact that Claire Clairmont was certainly now (and increasingly so as years advanced) not unnaturally, but also not always within reasonable bounds, vindictive towards, and fond of recording any report derogatory to, her former lover ; also by the fact that Lord Lovelace is uniformly, and I may add uniquely, favourable and just in his references to Shelley. Shelley's happier impression of the author of "*Don Juan*" is most nobly recorded in his "*Julian and Maddalo*," written probably between his first and second visits to Venice.

On the 24th October, Shelley returned to the Villa Cappuccini for a few days to fetch Allegra away from her mother, and to return her to the temporary care of the Hoppners ; and on the 29th he brought the little girl back to Venice, and on that day poor Claire embraced her child for the last time. On the day following Shelley and Mary returned to Este, only to prepare for a further journey southward. On the 5th November the whole party, including Elise, who had returned to Mary's service, set out for Rome.

CHAPTER V

WORK IN ESTE—"JULIAN AND MADDALO," ETC.

THE early autumn days spent by Shelley in Este were, notwithstanding bad spirits and bad health, a period of extraordinary and most valuable productivity. When he wrote to Mary from Padua on the 22nd September, sixteen pages of the first act of "Prometheus Unbound" were already lying on the table at which he was wont to work in the pavilion of the "Cappuccini" garden, and the whole of the first act was completed by the 8th October.

"Julian and Maddalo" Dowden supposes to have been written between the date of Shelley's first and second visits to Venice; and this certainly seems most likely both from the favourable impression of Byron which it conveys, and from the description of little Allegra, playing with the billiard-balls in her father's house, as the child, during Shelley's later visits to Venice, was with her mother in Este.

This delightful poem reveals to us a faculty of Shelley's not before displayed, and rarely exercised; the power of interpreting in perfectly simple, but elevated poetic form, talk, scenes, and emotions, in the life of men; it is familiar without ever approaching near the commonplace, as poetry dealing with the familiar so frequently does. "Julian and Mad-

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dalo " purports to be "a Conversation" between a Venetian nobleman, Count Maddalo (Lord Byron) and "an Englishman of good family," Julian (Shelley himself), and their visit to a Venetian mad-house, where they are silent listeners to the melancholy outpourings of a maniac, an unfortunate man stranded in Venice, disappointed in love, ruined in fortune, and blighted in worldly hopes, who certainly in many respects displays another, and the gloomier, phase of Shelley's own life and experience, even if we do not go so far as to consider, as Mr. Salt does, that in the monologue of the Maniac, Shelley actually intended to present a picture of his own disappointment in his first marriage.¹ The poem and the introduction thereto are invaluable for their autobiographical lights, and for the picture they present of Lord Byron and his tone of conversation. The brief account of Maddalo gives a vivid and penetrating account of Lord Byron's disposition and manner, and at the same time reveals the depth and clearness of Shelley's mature insight into character. "It is his weakness to be proud," he writes; "he derives from a comparison of his own extraordinary mind with the dwarfish intellects that surround him, an intense apprehension of the nothingness of human life."

The same idea is finely expressed in the poem :

"The sense that he was greater than his kind
Had struck, methinks, his eagle spirit blind
By gazing on its own exceeding light."

Of Julian we are told that he was "passionately attached to those philosophical notions which assert

¹ "Percy Bysshe Shelley—a Monograph" by Henry S. Salt.

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the power of man over his own mind, and the immense improvements of which, by the extinction of certain moral superstitions, human society may be yet susceptible. Without concealing the evil in the world, he is for ever speculating how good may be made superior. He is a complete infidel, and a scoffer at all things reputed holy ; and Maddalo takes a wicked pleasure in drawing out his taunts against religion. What Maddalo thinks on these matters is not exactly known." There is a quaint touch of dry humour in the information that " Julian, in spite of his heterodox opinions, is conjectured by his friends to possess some good qualities."

Of the Maniac Shelley states that he can give no information. In the letter to Leigh Hunt in which he encloses the poem to be handed over to the publisher Ollier, he states that the third character in the Conversation, like the two first, is also in some degree a painting from Nature, but "with respect to time and place, ideal." It is clear that Shelley had himself in mind in his conception of this unfortunate man, who speaks of himself as one—

" Who loved and pitied all things, and could moan
For woes which others hear not, and could see
The absent with the glance of fantasy,
And with the poor and trampled sit and weep,
Following the captive to his dungeon deep ;
Me, who am as a nerve o'er which do creep
The else unfelt oppressions of this earth. . . ."

The poem gives us a charming picture of Shelley's rides along the banks of the Lido with Lord Byron, their talks "concerning God, freewill, and destiny," the younger poet's confident hopes in the future of

mankind and the regenerating power of the emancipated will of man, and Byron's doubts, and stout refusal, when half overwhelmed by his friend's arguments, to bend his judgment to the other's opinion.

But perhaps the greatest charm of " Julian and Maddalo " lies in the more purely familiar passages between the two friends ; in the descriptions of the scenery through which they rode or glided in their gondola, " that funereal bark " which elsewhere Shelley describes as resembling a moth " of which a coffin might have been the chrysalis," and the pervading glory of the Venetian sunset ; in the account of the beautiful and lively little child Allegra—" a serious, subtle, wild yet gentle being"—the evenings spent in talk in Maddalo's palace, and the many-sided joys of Venetian life.

For some reason, partly, it would appear, in compliance with Claire Clairmont's request, " Julian and Maddalo " was withheld from publication till after the death of both Shelley and Byron, although it had been its writer's original intention to publish it anonymously, as also to follow it up with two poems on somewhat similar lines dealing with Rome and with Naples—an intention which, unfortunately, he never carried out. Mr. Rossetti very justly regards " Julian and Maddalo " as Shelley's first consummate and complete triumph in poetry, as he set the finishing hand to which work " he ceased to be a subject of time, and became a citizen of Eternity."

The beautiful " Lines written among the Euganean Hills," describing the emotions of an autumn day, sunrise, and noon, and the early descent of evening, viewed from the heights ; and the brief emotions, and eternal recurrence of hope, which carry the

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weary traveller through life, as he beheld them mirrored in this vision of Autumn, was another fruit of Shelley's sojourn at "I Cappuccini." He describes the vision of the cities beneath him islanded in "the waveless plain of Lombardy." "Ocean's nurseling" Venice, the sun-girt city, first child, and then Queen of the Ocean, now in a darker day haply the destined prey thereof—

"A less drear ruin then than now,
With thy conquest-branded brow
Stooping to the slave of slaves . . ."

he beholds with its towers "quivering through aerial gold":

"Sepulchres where human forms
Like pollution-nourished worms,
To the corpse of Greatness cling,
Murdered and now mouldering";

and he invokes death for Venice rather than such degradation—death and oblivion of all, except that the sea-city had once sheltered Byron. When we reach the lines :

"What though thou with all thy dead
Scarce couldst for this fame repay?"

Mr. Rossetti in his notes to his edition of the Poems observes : "It is strange to observe how insular even such an Englishman as Shelley can be on occasion. Venice, unless renovated by freedom, is to go to the dogs—leaving only one memory, that Lord Byron lived there for a while after quitting England ! Oh, shades of Dandolo, of Marco Polo, of Bellini, Carpaccio, Giorgione, Titian, Tintoret,

Veronese, and how many another immortal!" And happily, since the poem was written and since Shelley death other names, not less glorious to the fame of Venice than the sojourn there of Byron, can be added to the list. These lines about Byron were, however, an afterthought of the poet, inserted after the termination of the original manuscript.

The poem, for the rest, is full of exquisite touches of nature, best appreciated by those who know the serene and melancholy beauty of an Italian autumn among the hills, and the "noon of autumn's glow":

"When a soft and purple mist,
Like a vaporous amethyst,
Or an air-dissolvèd star
Mingling light and fragrance, far
From the curved horizon's bound
To the point of heaven's profound
Fills the overflowing sky."

CHAPTER VI

JOURNEY SOUTHWARD—FIRST IMPRESSION OF ROME—DEJECTION
IN NAPLES—SHELLEY AND MARY

FERRARA was the first *étape* on the journey southward, and from there Shelley wrote to Peacock on the 8th November, telling of the journey so far. Bad roads, and the various tokens of oncoming winter in the rural districts and farmsteads by which the carriage passed on its way from Este to Ferrara, and the teams of beautiful white oxen, which especially attracted the poet's notice, are the principal impressions of this brief journey. An attempt to visit the Cathedral of Ferrara was frustrated by the importunities of beggars ; but the magnificent library, with its hundred and sixty thousand volumes, the MSS. of Ariosto, Tasso, and others, the chair and inkstand of the former, and his tomb—over which monuments and relics Shelley lingered with more patience than he had recently done over his verses—were visited.

What seems to have most seized on Shelley's imagination in Ferrara was the dungeon where Tasso was confined ; a small, damp, unhealthy abode, unfit for the meanest and coarsest of the human species, but where this "glorious being" was divided from

the light and air during a period of seven years and three months.

When Byron had visited Ferrara the previous year the memories of Tasso and his misfortunes had taken deep root also in his mind, and his "Lament of Tasso" was the outcome of this visit : a work which may have been responsible for the fact that Shelley never carried out his own projected drama on the same subject.

On the 8th November the travellers reached Bologna—where churches, palaces, and pictures innumerable were duly visited, with much consequent fatigue and confusion of mind. Poor Shelley's earnest and painstaking endeavours to pay the proper degree of homage demanded of the English traveller of his day to the Guidos and Correggios is almost pathetic. He had little taste for painting at its best, and much less understanding of this art than of sculpture, from which he later on derived much genuine pleasure. Raphael's "Saint Cecilia" in Bologna seems, however, to have awakened his real admiration—also a "Christ Baptized" by Correggio ; and Guido's paintings elicited praise of a somewhat laboured order. The frescoes of Franceschini in the Church of Santa Catarina—though he prudently observes them to be "certainly very inferior to Guido"—were perhaps the paintings which most genuinely appealed to him : "his winged children are the loveliest ideal beings ever created by the human mind" he writes to Peacock. Various paintings of saints and hermits proved too much for poor Shelley, however. One saint in a group by Correggio "seemed to have a pet dragon in a leash. I was told that it was the devil who was bound in that

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style—but who can make anything of four saints? For what can they be supposed to be about?" And after describing a picture by Guercino representing the founder of the Carthusian Order exercising his austerities in the desert, with all due attendant horrors, the author of "Queen Mab" exclaims :

" Why write books against religion when we may hang up such pictures? "

He also stoutly refuses to admire Carracci and Domenichino : a refusal which he prefaces with the confession that he does not " pretend to taste." The charm of the Bolognese arcades by moonlight, and a ride to the Church of the Madonna di San Luca on Mount Guardia, were among the more agreeable impressions of the Romagnol capital.

On the 7th November Shelley wrote to Peacock from Rome : " Behold me in the capital of the vanished world." From Bologna the party had travelled through Rimini and Fano, and thence by the Apennines, touching Foligno, Fossombrone, Spoleto, Terni, and Nepi, to Rome. On approaching Fossombrone, Shelley was deeply impressed by the magnificence of the mountain scenery. " It was a cloudy morning," he writes to Peacock, " and we had no conception of the scene that awaited us. Suddenly the low clouds were struck by the clear north wind, and like curtains of the finest gauze, removed one by one, were drawn from before the mountain, whose heaven-cleaving pinnacles and black crags, overhanging one another, stood at length defined in the light of day. . . . We passed on day after day, until we came to Spoleto, I think the most romantic city I ever saw. . . ." From Spoleto they proceeded to Terni, where Shelley and Mary stood

spellbound by the wonder and beauty of the magnificent waterfall. So impressed were they by the scenery here that they projected spending part of the following year in the neighbourhood. Their stay was now unromantically curtailed by the badness of the inn.

On approaching Rome, Shelley was, naturally enough, deeply impressed by the serene and suggestive grandeur of the Roman Campagna—"a place infinitely to my taste," he writes to Peacock. "It is a flattering picture of Bagshot Heath. But, then, there are the Apennines on one side and Rome and St. Peter's on the other, and it is intersected by perpetual dells clothed with arbutus and ilex."

The Shelleys spent only one week in Rome on the occasion of their first visit—a busy week, during which they contrived to see "the Vatican, St. Peter's, and all the miracles of ancient and modern art contained in that majestic city"—not a small order to be sure! Shelley was most deeply impressed by the vast and rugged grandeur of the Colosseum, then overgrown with wild olives, fig-trees, myrtles, and flowers innumerable. Here Mary sat sketching while little William played about, and here, too, Shelley in all likelihood began writing his unfinished tale "The Coliseum"—an unsubstantial, sentimental effusion written in his worst style, a style almost irreconcilable with the author and period of "Prometheus Unbound." The principal interest of the tale is centred in the figure of a somewhat vapoury youth, who is supposed to be inspired by Shelley's conception of himself.

During this first brief stay in the Eternal City, Shelley also found his way to the non-Catholic cemetery, where his ashes were finally to rest, adding yet

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another memory to the undying memories of Rome. He writes of it as the most beautiful and solemn cemetery he ever beheld.

Shelley proceeded alone to Naples on the 27th November, in order to secure lodgings for the whole party, and so avoid the necessity of putting up at an inn in the first instance. Mary and the others followed later, arriving on the evening of the 1st December. As Shelley proceeded southward, it appeared to him that the wild beauty of the landscape and the ferocity of the inhabitants gradually increased in equal ratio. The good-natured geniality of the Neapolitans seems to have quite escaped his observation. He certainly had an unfortunate experience—which can have enhanced his good opinion neither of the Italians nor of the priesthood—in witnessing the pusillanimity of a Calabrian priest, whom he describes as frantically terrified at the notion of robbers, but who facetiously enjoyed the spectacle of a youth being done to death by an infuriated man, and indeed “attempted to quiz” Shelley as “what the English call a flat” on his expressing his horror and indignation at the scene.

“But external nature in these delightful regions contrasts with and compensates for the deformity and degradation of humanity,” he writes to Peacock from Naples. And, indeed, from his lodgings, overlooking the Public Gardens, the Bay, and the blue waters, “for ever changing, yet for ever the same,” he enjoyed a view which might well compensate for many shortcomings. The climate, too, was a delight to him; to be able to sit with open windows and no fire in December was a revelation to this sun-worshipper; though, indeed, at a later date he speaks

of having suffered severely at times from the cold here. By boat the Shelleys visited Baiae and Pozzuoli, returning by a moonlight night which delighted the poet with its rich southern colours and radiance unknown in our regions.

On the 16th December Shelley, with Mary and Claire, ascended Vesuvius, Shelley and Mary on mules, and Claire carried shoulder high in a chair, "much like a Member of Parliament after he has gained his election, and looking, with less reason, quite as frightened"—which puts one in mind of Hogarth's triumphant candidate, of whom perhaps Shelley also was thinking. After the glaciers at Montanvert, Vesuvius was, to Shelley, the most impressive exhibition of the energies of Nature he had ever seen. "It has not the immeasurable greatness, the overpowering magnificence, nor, above all, the radiant beauty of the glaciers," he writes to Peacock, "but it has all their character of tremendous and irresistible strength." But the bodily fatigue, the excitement, and the powerful emotions which this astounding vision of the primitive forces of Nature must arouse in the least sensitive to such impressions, proved too much for Shelley at the moment ; and he had to be conducted back to the Hermitage of San Salvador in a state of intense bodily suffering and collapse. The wildness of the gestures and physiognomies of the rude guides who conducted the party up Vesuvius, and the "clamour, the vociferation, the tumult" they created were impressed almost as deeply on the poet's mind as the savage nature of the scenery which surrounded them.

With the deepest and most loving interest in that

wonderful revelation of the life of the ancients, Shelley, on the 22nd December, visited the ruins of Pompeii. He was much struck with the modesty of the Pompeian residences as contrasted with the magnificence of the public edifices that tower above them, visible from, and ever dominating the interiors of the dwelling-houses and the lives of the inhabitants ; and by the lavish grandeur of the tombs. "How unlike ours ! " Shelley exclaims. "They seem not so much hiding-places for that which must decay, as voluptuous chambers for immortal spirits. . . . These tombs were the most impressive things of all. The wild woods surround them on either side ; and along the broad stones of the paved road which divides them you hear the late leaves of autumn shiver and rustle in the stream of the inconstant wind, as it were, like the step of ghosts"—a thought which we find again in the opening lines of the "Ode to the West Winds," which may have received the first germ of its conception here in the autumn of 1818.

But over this winter in Naples, notwithstanding the manifold attractions of Nature and art, the serenity and mildness of the climate, and the gradual improvement in Shelley's health, there hung a brooding and mysterious melancholy. In none of Shelley's poetry—except perhaps the lines written at Bracknell shortly before the separation from his first wife—is there such a sense of weary, tired despondency as in the beautiful "Lines written in Dejection near Naples." He felt himself alone in his sorrow ; his serene companion could not penetrate it. Mary loved Naples, and writing of it in 1819 speaks of her good spirits there. Years later, when death had

closed the gate on the possibility of any further or deeper understanding between Shelley and Mary, she wrote of this period with bitter and unavailing self-reproach for her lack of sympathy and understanding at the time. That there was a certain degree of coldness and hardness in Mary's temperament, not entirely in harmony with the intensely sensitive and warmly affectionate nature of her husband, seems from all evidence to be a fact; a woman of many noble qualities of heart and mind, insensible neither to love nor to duty, she was none the less at times more philosopher than mother, and a trifle too self-centred for the perfect lover or wife. The small, firm mouth portrayed in the portraits of Mary Shelley does not, for instance, reveal the generosity and broadness of sympathy shown in her mother's countenance. Both women had their fight with the world, and the bitterness thereof; but where Mary Wollstonecraft's more passionate nature expanded and mellowed, as it were, under the blows and bludgeonings of fate, her daughter's, though rarely ruffled in its serenity, by imperceptible degrees tightened and hardened. There is, it seems to me, far more maternal tenderness and spontaneity of feeling, albeit mixed with a more caustic wit, in the letters of Mary Wollstonecraft than in those of Mary Shelley. But there is no reason to assume, with regard to the period we are speaking of, that Mary had to reproach herself with anything worse than that degree of blindness and lack of sympathy and understanding which most of us are conscious of—with what bitterness and unavailing regret!—in recalling any well-loved person when it is too late to repair or atone for our shortcomings.

Towards the close of his life Trelawny said of Mary that she felt compunction when she had lost Shelley, but neither understood nor appreciated him alive—a harsh judgment, and one that can scarcely be *altogether* fair. In her poem “The Choice,” written shortly after she had lost her husband, Mary, with natural exaggeration of feeling, expresses herself with at least equal severity, though she may have been thinking of a later period than these early months of 1819 when she wrote it :

“Now fierce remorse and unreplying death
 Waken a chord within my heart, whose breath,
 Thrilling and keen, in accents audible
 A tale of unrequited love doth tell.

* * * *

It speaks of cold neglect, averted eyes,
 That blindly crushed thy soul’s fond sacrifice :—
 My heart was all thine own,—but yet a shell
 Closed in its core, which seemed impenetrable,
 Till sharp-toothed misery tore the husk in twain,
 Which gaping lies, nor may unite again.”

This feeling of melancholy is slightly referred to in Shelley’s letters during his sojourn in Naples. “I have depression enough of spirits and not good health,” he wrote to Peacock on the 22nd November, “though I believe the warm air of Naples does me good. We see absolutely no one here.”

It is possible that there was some deeper cause for this state of melancholy than what appears on the surface, than the very many causes which might, in the natural and simple course of life—and of such a life—have occasioned it. Medwin positively states that a mysterious lady of high birth, position,

and wealth, who was enamoured of Shelley in England, and who, unaware of his attachment to Mary, came to him and revealed her passion for him on the eve of one of his departures from England (there is much confusion of date regarding the precise occasion—probably 1816), and who had of necessity been rejected by him with all possible gentleness, had now followed him to Naples, once staying, unknown to the poet, at the same hotel with him and his party on the road thither. In Naples, so Medwin states, she finally revealed her presence and her hopeless pursuit of him to Shelley, shortly afterwards dying in that city—whether by her own hand, or the proverbial “broken heart,” or some other cause, is unexplained. So far as I am aware there is no absolutely trustworthy evidence for the veracity of these circumstances, which, however, Claire in later years confirmed, and which Medwin asserts Lord Byron to have been acquainted with; Medwin also purports to have known who Shelley’s mysterious *innamorata* was, though he refrains from giving her name. Trelawny stated in his later years, in conversation with Mr. Rossetti, that Shelley twice attempted suicide—once in London, and again during this sojourn in Naples. On both occasions he took laudanum, but was aroused from its effects by being kept on his feet in constant motion.

Besides the somewhat unsubstantial and uncertain mystery of the enamoured lady, in Shelley’s life in Naples, there was an almost equally mysterious circumstance connected with a child entrusted to him. It appears from letters of his written from Leghorn in the summer of 1820 to the Gisbornes (who were

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apparently fully acquainted with the facts of the case) that he was then interested in a little girl, whom he refers to as his "Neapolitan" or "Neapolitan charge," whom he intended to have conveyed to him at Leghorn or Pisa, but who died, presumably at Naples, from a fever arising from dentition, in June of that year. It seems certain that Shelley's interest in and connection with the child dated from the period of his stay in Naples; but who the child was, and whether, by any chance, she was connected with the shadowy lady spoken of by Medwin and Claire Clairmont, is not known. In Mrs. Gisborne's diary, written at the period of the receipt of Shelley's letter relating to the death of the child, I find no reference to the matter. It is certain that there was some circumstance connected with Shelley's life in Naples in the winter of 1818-19 which his servant, Paolo Foggi—a good-for-nothing rascal whom Shelley acquired in Leghorn or the Bagni di Lucca—saw fit to embellish and dish up as a scandal in the hope of extracting money from his ex-employer a year or so later—a matter which we must refer to in due course. For the present, suffice it to say concerning Paolo that he was dismissed in Naples after having distinguished himself by inordinate cheating and by the seduction of the Swiss maid Elise, whom Mrs. Shelley, not very wisely for any of the parties concerned, insisted upon his marrying.

The stanzas to "The Past," which Shelley probably wrote in Naples, would tend to suggest the most simple and natural cause for his dejection as the true one; the troubles and sorrows he had recently lived through, and which so often take

deepest hold on the imagination when the actual events themselves are past :

“Forget the dead, the past? Oh, yet
There are ghosts that may take revenge for it!
Memories that make the heart a tomb,
Regrets which glide through the spirit's gloom,
And with ghostly whispers tell
That joy once lost is pain.”

CHAPTER VII

ROME—"PROMETHEUS UNBOUND"

SHELLEY'S second and longer sojourn in Rome, which lasted from the 5th March till the 10th June, is principally memorable for two circumstances : the death of Shelley's favourite child, William—to whom alone among the children of his second marriage some of his verses are addressed—and the completion, as originally designed, of the "Prometheus Unbound." The death of a little child, and the birth of a great poem!—two incidents in which it appears to us that the importance of the one overshadows and dominates the significance of the other; but to Shelley at the time, no doubt, what there was of joy in the creation was dwarfed and effaced by the tragedy of this dissolution as he watched by the death-bed of his little son.

It is small wonder that Rome—that phoenix among cities, buried under so much dust, and rearisen from so many ruins ; that centre of the thought, life, and art of the pagan and the Christian world, should even then, in days of Papal tyranny unrelieved by Papal greatness—before it once again arose from fresh baptismal blood to assert its individuality—have taken a strong hold on the poet's mind.

"My impression of it exceeds anything I have ever

experienced in my travels," Shelley wrote at the time of his first brief glimpse in December. And now he had leisure to visit at his ease the countless treasures of Rome, and to select and linger over what most appealed to him.

In all Shelley's poetry a love of vast and desert prospects is manifest, of those scenes and places where the imagination can dwell without let or limit. In "Julian and Maddalo" he expresses this predilection :

"... I love all waste
And solitary places; where we taste
The pleasure of believing what we see
Is boundless, as we wish our souls to be."

So far as such impressions can be found in cities, in the midst of the works and habitations of man, Shelley was able to enjoy them in Rome, amid the ruins of the Colosseum, the Palatine, and the Thermæ of Caracalla, where the wrecks of man's boundless ambition are dominated alone by the vaster and more enduring powers of Nature. Nowhere in the world, perhaps, is there a more impressive scene than that of the exquisitely delicate and desolate sweep of the Roman Campagna as viewed from the higher points of the ruins of the Roman Emperor's Baths—themselves vaster and more ambitious in scale than Rome's greatest and most magnificent temple of Christian worship. To Shelley, who saw most things in Nature and art in their relation to the thought, philosophy, life, and destiny of man, such a scene was naturally a source of delight and inspiration. "Never was any desolation more sublime and lovely," he writes to Peacock, "The perpendicular

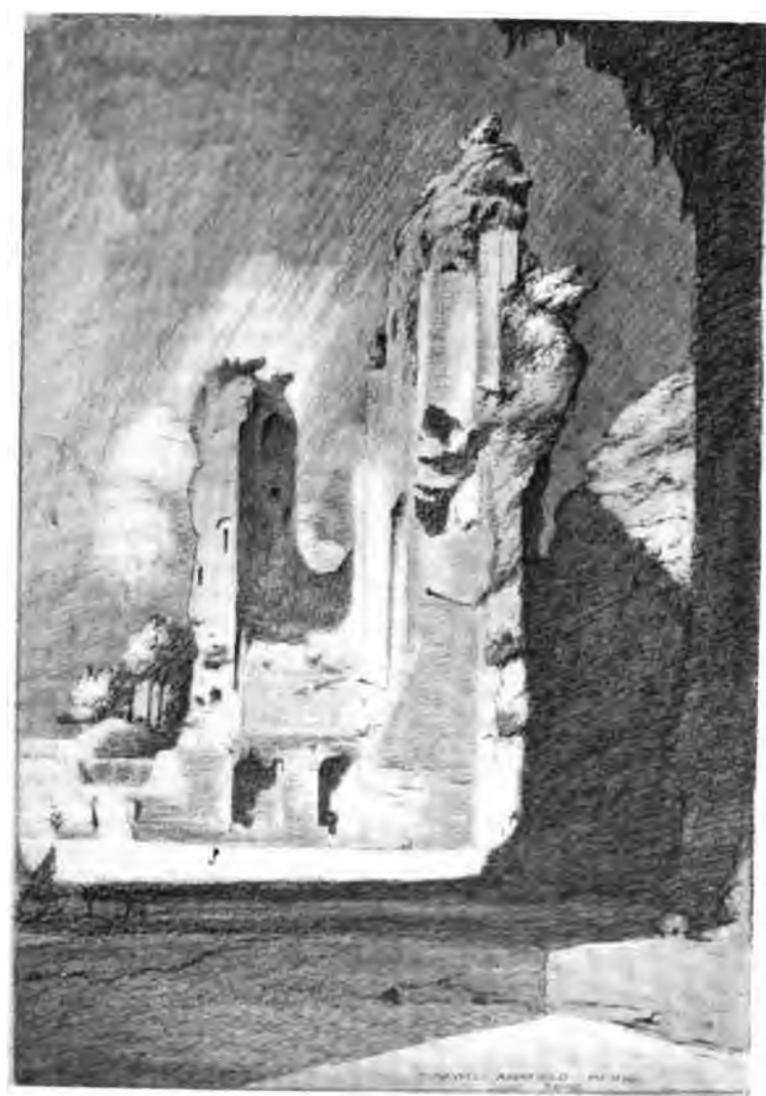
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wall of ruin is cloven into steep ravines filled up with flowering shrubs, whose thick, twisted roots are knotted in the rifts of the stones. At every step the aerial pinnacles of shattered stone group into new combinations of effect, and tower above the lofty yet level walls, as the distant mountains change their aspect to one travelling rapidly along the plain. . . . The blue sky canopies it, and is as the everlasting roof of these enormous halls."

Here it was, amid the ruins of the ancient world, then untamed by archaeologists and given over unchallenged to the embrace of Nature, that the second and third acts of the great poem of the future of mankind were written. In the Preface, Shelley tells us :

" This poem was chiefly written upon the mountainous ruins of the Baths of Caracalla, among the flowery glades, and thickets of odoriferous blossoming trees, which are extended in ever-winding labyrinths upon its immense platforms and dizzy arches suspended in the air. The bright blue sky of Rome, and the effect of the vigorous awakening of spring in that divinest climate, and the new life with which it drenches the spirits even to intoxication, were the inspiration of this drama."

" Prometheus Unbound " is the revelation of Shelley's fullest and highest powers and of the ideals and beliefs which governed his being. The power of the human mind to resist and in the end to triumph over evil, and the all-conquering strength of love, are the main elements of the poem. Prometheus (the human Mind and Will)—sole rebel against the omnipotence of Jupiter ; against all forms of error, superstition, cruelty, and slavery—though bound and



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tormented by his unconquering conqueror, remains throughout all the ages unsubdued ; he resists all forms of torture, even that subtlest and cruellest of all, the torture of seeing good turned and travestied into evil, as in the sacrifice of Christ, and the Christian religion which sprang from it. He outlives hatred, vengeance, and all weaknesses ; remains in the end unpolluted and indomitable. Jupiter—the cruel Deity of the world—is conceived as the creation of the human mind rather than its Creator ; the self-inflicted tyrant and persecutor thereof, whose sway shall endure until the mind and will of man shall have purified and perfected themselves, and shall thus work out their final emancipation and salvation.

These ideas, the basis of Shelley's philosophy—which have been so fruitful and have exercised such deep influence on the thought and progress of his century—are expressed with unequalled power, energy, and poetic beauty.

It is certainly true that Prometheus, once emancipated from his bonds, and having fulfilled his purpose (at the end of the third act), loses much of his energy and *raison d'être*, as indeed he was fatally destined to do. There is ever a certain lack of energy and sustained power in attainment, and all Utopias which the human mind can conceive have a fatal tendency towards insipidity and stagnation. Prometheus, in his sylvan visions of contemplative repose and love in a cavern, puts one in mind somehow of a kind of sublimated Leigh Hunt—not altogether a satisfying vision of the final destiny of mankind. It is indeed difficult to imagine man at the end of his fights and struggles ; what but

the idle contemplation of Nature, and the weaving of garlands of flowers—not often of bay and laurel indeed—would remain to him? It required the supreme effort of the supreme mind of Alighieri to conceive a non-stagnant Paradise.

Mrs. Shelley tells us in her note to the poem that Shelley from the beginning of his sojourn in Italy, throughout the many wanderings of this busy year, had meditated the subject of "Prometheus Unbound." The first act, as we have seen, was the work of a few days during the much interrupted and disturbed period of his stay in Este. The last act, "a sort of hymn of rejoicing in the fulfilment of the prophecies in regard to Prometheus," was an after-thought, added several months later, towards the end of the year, in Florence.

The poem was published by Ollier in the summer of 1820, and became the butt of the foolish jibes and abuse of reviewers and literati. Campbell made his pun on it: "'Prometheus Unbound'—who would bind it?" and *Blackwood's Magazine* declared it quite impossible for a "more pestiferous mixture of blasphemy, sedition, and sensuality!" to exist.

In the same letter to Peacock in which Shelley describes the Baths of Caracalla he gives his impressions of Rome—"a city of palaces and temples, more glorious than those which any other city contains, and of ruins more glorious than they. Seen from any of the eminences that surround it, it exhibits domes beyond domes, and palaces and colonnades interminably, even to the horizon; interspersed with patches of desert, and mighty ruins which stand girt by their own desolation, in the midst of the fane[s]

of living religions and the habitations of living men, in sublime loneliness."

The general impression of the interior of St. Peter's is happily and concisely expressed in the verdict : "Littleness on a large scale"—an opinion of which Shelley tried in vain to dissuade himself. The exterior of the cathedral and the dignified colonnade produced, naturally enough, a much more favourable impression.

But the severe and sublimely simple grandeur of the Pantheon, which Shelley visited on the 9th March and again by moonlight the same night, effaced the more pretentious claims of St. Peter's. The many fountains of Rome, which impart such a particular life and character to the city, also delighted him, more especially that of the Quirinal. In the midst of so much inherited grandeur, the moral degradation of the Italy of his day was symbolized to him in the groups of fettered convicts, heavily ironed and chained together two by two, whom he saw at work hoeing out weeds, amid all the glories of the ancient world, in the Piazza San Pietro.

CHAPTER VIII

ROME AND THE ROMANS—DEATH OF WILLIAM SHELLEY

ROME was not viewed by Shelley solely in the light of the world's great Necropolis, though doubtless he was more interested in its dead than in its living aspects, and on the occasion of his first visit rejoiced in the fact that in Rome, in the first enthusiasm of his recognition of ancient time, he saw nothing of the Italians. Rome was to him then as the city of the undying dead, who survived the puny generations who passed over the spot they had rendered sacred to eternity. But on his second visit he was pleased with what he saw of the Romans of his day, more especially the women, whom he found interesting, though uncultivated—"a kind of gentle savages." "Their extreme innocence and naiveté, the freedom and gentleness of their manners," he writes, "make an intercourse with them very like an intercourse with uncorrupted children, whom they resemble in loveliness as well as simplicity."

Two days after their arrival in Rome the party settled down in the Palazzo Verospi, about half-way down the Corso, the centre of the city's life. This palazzo is now distinguished by a well-meaning, but singularly ill-expressed tablet placed by the Municipio.

pality of Rome, in homage to the poet's sojourn within its walls.

In Rome, for the first time, the Shelleys saw something of Italian society : of the British little, with the exception of the Irish Miss Curran, to whom we are indebted for the portrait of the poet, such as it is. Lord Guilford, on the 10th March, and later on Sir William Drummond, author of the "Academical Questions," which Shelley held in high esteem, called on the poet and his family in Rome. But *en masse* Shelley regarded his touring compatriots with much the same horror as Byron did, and found the manners of the rich English insupportable, along with the pretensions upon which they ventured in a foreign country—a feeling which it is evident that Mary, who would fain have seen something of the better English society in Rome, only partially shared.

The Italian of whom the Shelleys saw most in Rome was the Signora Marianna Candida Dionigi, with whom Claire and Mary visited many points of interest, and whose *conversazioni* Shelley occasionally attended with them. This lady, born in 1756, was an authoress of some repute on artistic and archaeological matters, whose *salon* was well frequented by the cosmopolitan intellectual society of Rome, though it belonged to the somewhat heavy and ponderous order, not uncommon in the Italy of her day—such as Lamartine describes as producing " Dialogues of the Dead : dissertations not conversations." Mary, in a letter to Mrs. Gisborne, describes the Signora Dionigi as " very old, very miserly, and very mean." It must have been in the Signora Dionigi's salon that Shelley had occasion to note

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the profound impression produced on the educated Italians, no less than on the populace, by the mention of the Cenci.

As elsewhere, the Shelleys lived a busy, studious life in Rome, reading and studying much, and Mary and Claire were concerned respectively with painting and singing lessons.

Towards the end of April, Mary and Claire, driving in the Villa Borghese, recognized a former London acquaintance, Miss Amelia Curran, a painter, daughter of the Irish Master of the Rolls, concerning whose death Mary wrote to Shelley from Marlow in October, 1817. They left their cards at Miss Curran's address, and on the 27th she returned their visit; after that date they met frequently, and Miss Curran painted in turn the portraits of the whole party.

Shelley and his first wife had also met Miss Curran in Godwin's house in 1812-13. In a letter to her friend Mrs. Nugent (16 January, 1813) Harriet Shelley records an unfavourable impression of the painter. "I have seen Miss Curran," she wrote. "She resides in England. What I saw of her I did not like. . . . Besides, she is a coquette, the most abominable thing in the world." But poor Harriet was prone to somewhat rapid and erratic dislikes of a not very reasonable and logical kind, and we hear no more of the "most abominable" quality in the world from Shelley or Mary; possibly Miss Curran had sobered down in the intervening six years.

In a letter to the Gisbornes, dated 6 April, 1819, Shelley speaks of a "combination of circumstances [possibly connected with his "Neapolitan charge"]

which Mary will explain to you," which was to lead them back to Naples by the end of May, where they proposed to take a house at Portici or Castellamare till the late autumn, and where they hoped the Gisbornes might be induced to join them. The state of Shelley's health, which early in April seemed in a very decadent and depressed condition, induced them to settle on an early date (7th May) for their departure from Rome. However, when that date arrived, Shelley's health had improved; and this circumstance, as well as the fact that Miss Curran was engaged in painting portraits of himself and Claire, and that Mary was herself drawing under her friend's guidance—and possibly also the discovery that late spring in Rome is a very enjoyable season—caused them to postpone their projected journey.

Of these portraits of Miss Curran—poor and incomplete efforts of an amateur—perhaps the least successful is that of Shelley himself; yet we are grateful for it as the only definite basis we possess for our conception of the poet's appearance. The rather long, oval face, with its beautiful forehead and wavy brown hair, the deep and somewhat dreamy blue eyes and well-shaped nose (which so irritated the author of the "Real Shelley," who pinned his unconquerable faith on the less ideal "small turn-up nose" of Shelley's own description), accord well enough with one's ideas of Shelley's looks. But there is a certain effeminacy—which was at that time considered, especially by amateur painters, as the proper attribute of the poetic physiognomy—about the whole thing, and more especially the mouth, which does not accord with the well-known characteristics of the man; with his indomitable will, courage, and

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creative energy, qualities which were strongly blended with his poetic and visionary fervour, mildness, and gentleness.

The portrait of Mary, though somewhat less imperfect as a work of art, noticeably displays Miss Curran's deficiencies as a colourist. That of little William was afterwards much treasured by the Shelleys as the only record they possessed of their dead child's aspect.

But the most successful of Miss Curran's portraits painted in Rome was that of Claire, of which Trelawny obtained possession in 1823, and which he then describes, in writing to Claire, as "an excellent likeness—free from the common fault of flattering, I suppose by being taken by a woman," a painting which shows Claire to have been a very pretty and agreeable-looking brunette, but which makes her certainly look some years older than twenty-two, which is supposed to have been her age in 1819.

The delay due to these various causes proved fatal to little William. The Roman climate, though now healthy enough throughout the summer, was till a comparatively recent date considered dangerous owing to unsanitary conditions, and fever lurked in the exhalations of the surrounding Campagna. On the 2nd June the child fell seriously ill, and on the 7th at midday, despite the devoted care of his parents and Claire, he died. During sixty hours Shelley endured without rest the torture of watching his child's hopeless struggles against death, and Mary, who during the hours of agonized suspense wrote that "the hopes of her life were bound up in him," was left prostrate in spirit by the blow.

Little William's body was laid to rest in the Protestant cemetery near the Porta San Paolo, which had so deeply appealed to Shelley when he visited it in the previous December, and where he was to follow him three years later. All Shelley's paternal affection seems to have been centred in little William, to whom he wrote after his death various fragments of verse, which may be taken as an uncompleted whole.

The introductory lines to the first fragment, so pathetic in their application by Shelley :

"With what truth may I say,
Roma ! Roma ! Roma !
Non è più come era prima !"

were at that time a popular *ritornello* among the labouring classes of Rome, and are quoted by Byron in his preface to the IVth Canto of "Childe Harold." ¹

¹ Zanazzo, in his collection of these *ritornelli*, gives it thus :

"Ah Roma, Roma !
Che tu nun sei ppiù Roma de prima
Sei diventata una città bbirbona !"

CHAPTER IX

LEGHORN—VILLA VALSOVANA—MARY'S DEPRESSION—THE CENCI—
SOCIAL-POLITICAL POEMS—THE ARISTOCRACY OF SHELLEY

ON the 9th June the now childless party left Rome for Leghorn, and on about the 20th of the month Shelley wrote to Peacock: "Our melancholy journey finishes at this town, but we retrace our steps to Florence, where, as I imagine, we shall remain some months."

From Rome, Shelley wrote to Peacock that some fine morning he would return to England out of pure weakness of heart. And now, after William's death, feeling that the hands of men and of Fate were equally against him and that on all sides Calamity was hunting him down, his thoughts turned naturally enough to his native land and friends.

But he saw little prospect or promise of returning to England. "Health, competence, tranquillity—all these Italy permits, and England takes away," Shelley had written. "I am regarded by all who know or hear of me, except, I think, on the whole, five individuals, as a rare prodigy of crime and pollution, whose look even might infect. This is a large computation, and I don't think I could mention more than three. Such is the spirit of the English abroad as well as at home."

Mary, whose physical condition was little suited to endure the painful ordeal she had been through, and who at all times had a constitutional tendency to melancholy, was for a time shaken out of her normal imperturbability of spirit by her grievous loss—lowered by her sorrow to the level of “the commonalty and mob of her sex,” as her father wrote to her in an expostulatory letter. “You have all the goods of fortune, all the means of being useful to others, and shining in your proper sphere,” he argued. “But you have lost a child: and all the rest of the world, all that is beautiful, and all that has a claim upon your kindness, is nothing, because a child of two years old is dead. . . .” “Oh, Philosophy!”—as Mary had wearily exclaimed some years before—now how ill-timed and how ill-expressed! “That I was a mother, and am so no longer,” was, she wrote in her diary, the cardinal point to which her thoughts obstinately returned after the death of her fortnight-old firstborn: how much more tragically might they now dwell on this idea, after the loss of Clara and the little “Wilmouse,” whose budding intellect and personality had gradually unfolded during three years under his parents’ eyes. And though by degrees she resumed her old readings and studies, her heart was heavy under a weight which was partially lifted only when, in the following November, another child was born to take the thrice deserted place.

The state of Mary’s health and spirits at this time can be judged from her letters. “I shall never recover that blow,” she writes to Miss Curran on the 17th June. “I feel it more than in Rome; the thought never leaves me for a single moment;

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everything on earth has lost its interest to me." "We are very dull at Leghorn," she writes to Marianne Hunt on the 25th August, "and I can therefore write nothing to amuse you." She describes as from a sense of duty the country around her and the picturesque Tuscan *podere*—a scene of beauty and colour, with rude music of men and insects, in the midst of which her heart was lonely and oppressed. "I never am in good spirits—often in very bad," she writes, "and Hunt's portrait has already seen me shed so many tears that, if it had his heart as well as his eyes, he would weep too in pity." In this letter she speaks also of the many vexations, "independent of those which God has kindly sent to wean me from the world if I were too fond of it," which had kept her from writing much in Italy.

Claire's perpetual worries and anxieties about Allegra, Godwin's difficulties, debts, and complaints, with which he never ceased from bombarding his unfortunate daughter and son-in-law, the state of her own health, and the necessity for removing and settling somewhere for the winter, made up a not contemptible list of minor vexations.

On the 4th August, Mary resumed her journal, which had been discarded since the hopeless turn in little William's illness : "Leghorn. I begin my journal on Shelley's birthday. We have now lived five years together ; and if the events of the five years were blotted out, I might be happy ; but to have won, and then cruelly to have lost, the associations of four years is not an accident to which the human mind can bend without much suffering"—after which she characteristically pro-

ceeds to recapitulate her readings since leaving England.

Shelley, deeply affected as he was by the loss of his well-beloved child, had the supreme resource of deep intellectual abstraction and creative work. In two fragments of verse which he wrote at this time he speaks of Mary having departed from him in her self-absorbing sorrow.

These sad months were spent in the neighbourhood of Leghorn at the Villa Valsovano, the immediate departure for Florence, at first projected, having been postponed to the summer months. Claire Clairmont briefly sums up the events of the first days and weeks after William's death in her journal :

"Monday, June 7 at noonday. Thursday, June 10, set out from Rome for Livorno. We visit the waterfall of Terni once again. We see also the Lake of Thrasimene, now called the Lake of Perugia. Arrive at Livorno,—'Aquila Nera'—Thursday 17th. Stay there a week, see the Gisbornes. Remove to Villetta Valsovano, near Monte Nero."

The Villa Valsovano, which the Shelleys took for three months, stood at that time well outside the bustling town of Leghorn. It is still standing—a large, dignified villa, in the Medicean style, basking in the radiant sunlight which bathes the near sea and hills in its mellow glory. The country round it is fertile and familiar, and in Shelley's time stretched, undisturbed by the habitations of men, to the sea-shore ; but the ever-spreading and absorbing town has gained on the solitude of the villa, and it now stands within the municipal walls. The little tower, where Shelley was wont to sit and study, and where he wrote the greater part of "The Cenci,"

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is still there ; but this "airy cell," as Mary Shelley described it, is no longer roofed and glazed. In the garden is still the picturesque arbour, formed by artificially training the branches of a sturdy elm-tree, where also Shelley was wont to study. Here are still the seventeenth-century stone benches and tables where Shelley sat and wrote. The garden is extensive, and at one time must have been sufficiently elegant ; it is now largely devoted to the cultivation of cabbages. From Villa Valsovano Shelley wrote to Peacock on the 6th July :

"I have a study here in a tower, something like Scythrop's,¹ where I am just beginning to recover the faculties of reading and writing. My health, whenever no Libeccio blows, improves. From my tower I see the sea, with its islands, Gorgona, Capraja, Elba, and Corsica, on one side, and the Apennines on the other."

There is something singularly restful and invigorating in that part of the Tuscan coast where Shelley now resided : the scenery is less grand and stirring than in many points of the Mediterranean, but has a calm and familiar beauty of its own which grows on one who dwells any length of time with it. In her Note on "The Cenci," Mary Shelley says :

"This [the terrace above alluded to] Shelley made his study ; it looked out on a wide prospect of fertile country, and commanded a view of the near sea. The storms that sometimes varied our day showed themselves most picturesquely as they were driven across the ocean ; sometimes the dark, lurid clouds dipped towards the waves, and became water-sprouts

¹ A character in Peacock's novel "Nightmare Abbey."

that churned up the waters beneath, as they were chased onward and scattered by the tempest. At other times the dazzling sunlight and heat made it almost intolerable to every other ; but Shelley basked in both, and his health and spirits revived under their influence." Shelley himself describes the view as a " pretty verdant scene."

During these summer months in the vicinity of Leghorn the Shelleys and Claire saw, of course, much of the Gisbornes—who were, indeed, their principal, or only, company. In his poetical letter to Maria Gisborne of the following year Shelley evokes the presence of the sad enchantress Memory, in order to revive these days—and by her aid recalls how together with his friends they had watched ocean and sky on the seashore :

" How I ran home through last year's thunderstorm,
And felt the transverse lightning linger warm
Upon my cheek ; and how we often made
Feasts for each other where goodwill outweighed
The frugal luxury of our country cheer" ;

and he recalls their talks of the dead past and the possible future, and how they used to listen " to some interrupted flow of visionary rhyme " of Shelley's own, or sought

" those deepest wells of passion or of thought"

in the poetry of the past, and their Spanish studies, and their readings of Calderon.

The month of September brought a slight change into the entourage of the Shelleys ; towards the middle of the month Mr. Gisborne departed for

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England with the object of obtaining there some situation for his stepson Henry Reveley ; and on or about the 4th of the same month Charles Clairmont, brother of Claire, arrived in Leghorn for a lengthy stay on his way to Vienna.

This young man, who was his sister's senior by some two years, seems in the main lines to have considerably resembled her in temperament, displaying much the same impetuosity, impatience of restraint, and lack of application and moral discipline ; to which he added a vein of blissful optimism, usually exercised at the expense of somebody else. Trelawny, who knew him in later years, held a very poor opinion of his moral stamina and worth.

A letter from Charles Clairmont, dated 12 January, 1815, addressed to Mr. Francis Place, the tailor-politician, on the subject of his sentiments towards Shelley and Shelley's then pending matrimonial troubles, gives much insight into his character, displaying, as it does, a tendency to mop up and vent ill-digested ideas and to jump to somewhat arbitrary judgments. At the date of the letter in question young Clairmont was, like the many vampires who ever surrounded and preyed on the unfortunate open-hearted and open-handed poet, "engaged in negotiations" of a sanguine but futile kind, "the basis of which was founded on Shelley's assistance." In other words, he then had in view a scheme for engaging in a highly "lucrative" distillery business in Ireland, which would, he confidently asserted, render him "fully capable of materially assisting the whole of his family" : a scheme which of course required capital, of which he had not a sou, and

which Shelley was to supply, at great sacrifice to himself, from his own very problematic resources. Distilleries, embankments, steamships, book-selling businesses, marriages, large families, permanent freedom from debt for inveterate debtors, newspapers!—all these castles in the air, and how many another, were expected to materialize and lay their foundations in *terra firma*, by virtue of the magic of poor Shelley's well-drained purse.

The distillery in Ireland, and other kindred projects, having failed, young Charles Clairmont betook himself to the Continent in the autumn of 1815, finding any refuge more acceptable than the disorganized Skinner Street household. In the spring of 1817 he wrote to Shelley from Bagnère, where he was drinking waters for indigestion, and where he had fallen in love, and was contemplating matrimony, with one Mlle. Jeanne Morel—a lady five years his senior and not handsome. It only required an annual contribution from Shelley to set this pretty matrimonial scheme going. "Do I dream, my dear Shelley," he then wrote, "when a gleam of gay hope gives me reason to doubt of the impossibility of my scheme? . . . I should choose beyond everything else in the world the life of Wordsworth; to cultivate a little *métairie* among the mountains, to become a hardy *campagnard*, and to have a sweet association with every sequestered vale and nook within the compass of my ramblings"—a truly Watteau-esque picture, with poor Shelley in the background paying for the blue ribbons with which to deck the shepherdess and the sheep which should act as the *mise en scène* of the "hardy *campagnard*." But poet as he was, Shelley did not apparently fall

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a victim to this particular scheme of poetic blood-sucking.

On the occasion of this visit to Leghorn, Shelley wisely pressed his quasi brother-in-law into some service as a reader of Spanish. "I make him read Spanish all day long," he wrote to Peacock.

On or about the 22nd August, Shelley wrote to Peacock : "I have been much better these last three weeks. My work on 'The Cenci,' which was done in two months, was a fine antidote to nervous medicines, and kept up, I think, the pain in my side, as sticks do a fire. Since then I have materially improved." He complains, however, that he does not walk sufficiently, Claire, who was occasionally his companion in his rambles, not being very expeditious in the matter of dressing.

Shelley's enthusiasm for the writings of Calderon—which led later to his admirable translations from the "Magico Prodigioso"—was divided at this time with admiration for another poet, the "most divine writer" Boccaccio. The rhythm and harmony which distinguish Boccaccio's language rendered him, in a high sense of the word, a poet in Shelley's estimation, and he judged him, while certainly inferior to Dante and Petrarch, to be far superior to Tasso and Ariosto, "the children of a later and a colder day."

But what renders Shelley's second stay on the Livornese coast most memorable to us is the completion of his tragedy on "The Cenci," which he had commenced writing in Rome as far back as the 14th May. Indeed, the inspiration for the tragedy was gathered principally in Rome, where the poet's imagination and dramatic instinct were

fired by the spectacle of the emotion aroused in Italians whenever the story of the ill-fated family and its unhappy heroine was referred to ; where the massive Cenci Palace and the Barberini Palace,¹ with its reputed portrait of Beatrice Cenci by Guido Reni, were visited ; and whence he chose to date the dedication to Leigh Hunt, 29 May, 1819.

Both the authorship and the subject of the Beatrice portrait are now disputed—indeed, the whole story of Guido's painting Beatrice in prison is refuted, and modern historians have much questioned the particulars of the whole tragedy of "The Cenci" which so appealed to Shelley. But whether the pathetic face of "Beatrice Cenci" was painted from Beatrice or not, and whether or no the technique of the painting is so inferior to Guido Reni's work as to exclude the possibility of his being its painter, Shelley was not the only one in his own or later generations to discover deep beauty and pathos in the picture. While talking of exploded beliefs, it may not be inappropriate to mention that Medwin's well-known story of the Roman street-cry "Cenci, cenci !" being mistaken by Shelley for the echo of his own thoughts,

¹ Both Shelley and Mary speak of the Palazzo Colonna. The reputed portrait of Beatrice Cenci was, however, then as now, in the Palazzo Barberini. Adolfo de Bosis in the Notes to his admirable translation of "The Cenci," points out that the error most probably arose from the fact that the title of Prince Barberini had then been recently conferred on a member of the Colonna family who had married the only heiress of the Barberinis, so that the palace might properly be known as the Barberini-Colonna, or Colonna, by the name of the husband. De Bosis also points out that Mary's statement about a portrait of Beatrice Cenci in the Palazzo Doria is erroneous, as no such portrait has been known in that family.

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must be erroneous. "Cenci, cenci!" is an unknown street-cry in Rome—and was so no less in Shelley's time than in ours—where "Robivecchj!" is the cry of the Jew old-clothes vendors, and where the word "cenci" for old rags is not in common use. The expression is rather Tuscan, and the incident may possibly have occurred to Shelley in Leghorn, while working on the drama there.

A copy of the manuscript history of the Cenci family belonging to the middle of the seventeenth century was first shown to Shelley in Leghorn, as far back as May, 1818, and Mary copied it on the 25th of that month before the family departed for the Bagni di Lucca, although in her later note to "The Cenci" she erroneously attributes the reading of the MS. to the period of their sojourn in Rome. Shelley at first urged Mary—whom he considered to possess dramatic talent—to write the tragedy; but she, very likely, was deterred by the unpleasantness and horror of the subject, or indeed her own domestic troubles and bereavements were fully sufficient to prevent her from undertaking any creative work at this time. It was not till after his enthusiasm on the subject had been aroused in Rome that Shelley himself decided to write it.

This terrible story, not of incestuous love, but rather of incestuous hatred; of human injustice, crime, and suffering; of venality and corruption; of weakness for good and strength for evil; this fearful network of horrors out of which only by evil can any deliverance be effected, which Shelley observed to have so deeply impressed the sensibilities and the sympathies of all classes of Italians, was then, and has remained to this day, curiously

unfruitful in the field of Italian drama. Guerrazzi's romance and Niccolini's play were both inspired by Shelley's tragedy : Niccolini's play, indeed—though a poor travesty of the original—was almost completely founded on it, even down to the reproduction of certain slips excusable in the Englishman, but less tolerable in the Italian writer. In general, the subject was adjudged by Italians one too repulsive and horrible even for the making of a tragedy, though intrinsically Italian and Roman and Catholic in spirit and matter, as the Italian poet Carducci put it.

In the powerful and terrible drama which he created out of this tale of crime and suffering, Shelley undoubtedly revealed fresh powers : the power, above all, of chaining and directing his aspiring and uncircumscribed imagination to hard and horrible realities and that of severe self-discipline. "I have avoided with great care in writing this play the introduction of what is commonly called 'mere poetry,'" he writes, "and I imagine there will scarcely be found a detached simile or a single isolated description, unless Beatrice's description of the chasm appointed for her father's murder should be judged to be of that nature."

The drama is indeed a model of terseness and directness, almost crude, but intensely dramatic, in the rapid unfolding of its action. Act follows thought, and effect cause, and the necessary evil generated by evil, with terrible and striking rapidity.

Amid the gloomy company formed by that almost superhuman monster of hatred and malice—as Shelley conceived him—Count Cenci, and the petty scoundrels, cowards, and weaklings who surround

him, the one strong, beautiful, and intensely pathetic figure of Beatrice, the avenger and parricidal liberator, stands out in telling relief, redeeming the otherwise sordid and abhorrent tragedy from utter gloom. Indeed, the monstrous wickedness and delight and glory in wrong-doing of Cenci himself elevate the drama, which might have been rendered sordid by the presence of a less devilish villain, by the duplicity of an Orsino, the weak-minded hesitation of a Giacomo, and the utter unhappiness and hopelessness of Lucrezia.

"The Cenci," commenced in Rome on the 14th May, and taken up again in Leghorn after the mournful interruption of little William's illness and death, was completed by the middle of August—a work of less than three months!—and on the 9th September Shelley dispatched the manuscript to Peacock in the hope that his friend might succeed in getting it produced at Covent Garden. Peacock had sent him some suggestions on the treatment of the subject, which arrived too late to be of service, and which Shelley in any case regarded as of little practical value.

Shelley had founded considerable hopes on the stage possibilities of his tragedy, because of its intrinsic superiority over all modern English plays, with, as he judged, the sole exception of Coleridge's "Remorse;" because of the vastly greater and more real interest of its plot; and also because he flattered himself that on this occasion he could not be accused of having written above the heads of the public. The part of Beatrice appeared to him to be singularly well adapted for Miss O'Neil, whom he had so much admired in the character of Bianca in Mil-

man's "Fazio," and he earnestly hoped that she might be persuaded to act it. But the laurels of authorship were not for Shelley's living brow, nor its shekels for his purse. The subject was regarded as too repulsive—too strong and bitter a draught for the squeamish stomachs of an English audience, notwithstanding the great skill and delicacy with which Shelley had handled it. It was refused by Covent Garden, and according to one statement of Shelley's (which may possibly depend on a mere slip of the pen, however), by Drury Lane as well ; this notwithstanding the care which Shelley had taken and imposed on all "in the know" to conceal the ill-reputed name of the tragedy's author. For not only was the name of Percy Bysshe Shelley one of public ill-repute, it was also likely to arouse the furies of private malice, which would have been directed against the success of any work bearing it. "With Shelley's public and private enemies," Mary wrote to Miss Curran, "it would certainly fail if known to be his ; his sister-in-law alone would hire enough people to damn it."

The first edition of 250 copies of "The Cenci," printed in Leghorn, was published in the spring of 1820 by Ollier ; a second edition appeared from the same publisher in 1821. It attracted some degree of attention, but by no means met with universal approbation, or obtained any financial success. Keats wrote of it disparagingly to Shelley, somewhat spitefully indeed. Later on its author himself did not rank it among his highest works.

Shelley's last writings in Leghorn, and his earliest in Florence, were called forth by generous democratic indignation against the bungling and

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iniquitous "Peterloo Massacre" at St. Peter's Field, near Manchester, when the great Reform meeting of the 16th August was dispersed by the Yeomanry and Hussars, with some bloodshed on both sides, but mostly on that of the people. Viewed as a massacre, the affair was not of very vast importance, as, in all, only five deaths resulted ; but the political and social significance of the affair was sufficiently considerable.

This event more particularly called forth the spirited and impressive "Masque of Anarchy" and the "Poems and Songs for the Men of England"—which, however, although written with a view to early publication for an immediate purpose, were held over and did not see the light of day in Shelley's lifetime. Leigh Hunt—perhaps with sufficient cause—fought shy of publishing the "Masque of Anarchy" in the *Examiner*, as Shelley had desired him to do : the times were not ripe nor the spirit of Englishmen prepared for the reception of such outspoken utterances, he averred ; nor was any publisher found for the other poems.

These political, or social-political, poems of Shelley reveal yet another side of his genius ; as in his "Cenci" he had given proof of his power of dealing directly and dramatically with the horrid tragedies of life, so in the "Masque of Anarchy," he shows his grasp of the social problems which convulsed his day, not only from the abstract ideal but also from the practical point of view ; though, of course, he is always more or less ideal even in his practical views of life.

The trend of modern progress has shown that Shelley was sufficiently far-seeing in his grasp of

these problems, and in his perception of the prime importance of economic reform and liberty ; indeed, he reveals himself as the forerunner of modern social-revolutionary ideas in this powerful poem. The unpractical and "ineffectual" dreamer had a very keen perception of the tendencies of progress and modern requirements ; and the poet of the emancipated mind of man saw clearly the necessity of liberating man's body and providing for his material wants no less than for his intellectual faculties and beliefs.

In such poems as these Shelley could not perhaps exercise his very highest and most sublime faculties ; yet in their simplicity of diction and spontaneous energy they remain unsurpassed in their kind and not easily approached in the English language.

While protesting in verse against the economic oppression of the people, Shelley's pen was not less vigorously employed in inditing a prose protest against the repression of freedom of speech, as exemplified in the trial and conviction of the book-seller Mr. Carlisle for "blasphemous libel."

Dowden, in his Life of Shelley, not without some show of reason, accuses the poet of inconsistency in exalting the people in his "Masque of Anarchy," and in his letter to Leigh Hunt on the subject of Mr. Carlisle's trial, referring to it as the "Great Beast," in its representative character of superstitious ignorance and brutal bigotry. But is it not the inconsistency of the people that should be impugned, rather than that of the advocate of its rights? Shelley was ever a consistent democrat in his life not less than in his principles and teachings, though in his constitution and delicacy of

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feelings he was an aristocrat in the best sense of the word. The word "aristocracy," he himself asserted, "is not susceptible of an ill signification : oligarchy is the term for the tyrannical monopoly of the few." Because Shelley, in his splendid sense of justice and his love of liberty, was a democrat, we cannot demand of him that he should be pleased with every manifestation of the "majesty of the people" ; that he should flatter the dead weight of ignorance and stupidity which, in one aspect, it stands for. He had experienced a sample of this in the course of his Irish agitations, and had been duly disgusted and repelled thereby.

From aristocratic pride and intolerance Shelley was admirably immune ; but while free from these we need not expect him to accept or acclaim the prejudices of the democracy. Writing in her journal in 1820, Mrs. Gisborne notes how she and the Hunts read over some of Shelley's letters one evening, and laughed at his "little occasional aristocratic sallies," but they agreed that in general it was "the aristocracy of superior with regard to inferior intellect." Hogg says much the same of Shelley ; and in these respects we would certainly not wish him to be less of an aristocrat.

CHAPTER X

THE MASONS—FLORENCE—SHELLEY AND ART IN ITALY—
“DAILY CARES AND VULGAR DIFFICULTIES”—BIRTH OF PERCY
FLORENCE SHELLEY—SOPHIA STACEY AND HER DIARY—HER
IMPRESSIONS OF SHELLEY—LYRICS ADDRESSED TO HER—SHELLEY'S
ITALIAN LETTER—“ODE TO THE WEST WIND” AND OTHER
WORK—DEPARTURE FOR PISA

TOWARDS the end of September, Shelley, accompanied by Charles Clairmont, made a brief excursion to Florence, where he engaged lodgings for six months in the Via Valfonda. The date of Mary's confinement was rapidly approaching, and it was in every way highly desirable that they should be settled for the winter. The journey which Mrs. Gisborne not unnaturally, under the circumstances, dreaded for her friend was managed successfully a few days later, with no worse contretemps than a little “agitation of the nerves” on Mary's part.

On the road to Florence the party, for the second time, paused at Pisa. Here they remained one day, partly for the rest, and partly with the object of making the acquaintance of Lady Mountcashel, or Mrs. Mason, by which name she was then known, an old and well-loved pupil and proselyte of Mary Wollstonecraft, between whom and herself a strong attachment had subsisted. Mrs. Mason knew of the

Shelleys through her correspondence with Godwin, who, after his first wife's death, had been the guest of Lady Mountcashel in Ireland.

Mrs. Mason was a strong-minded, capable woman, not free from outward eccentricity ; but with a solid basis of common sense, to judge from her little volume, "Advice to Young Mothers on the Physical Education of Children, by a Grandmother," which she published the year after Shelley's death. This book was held in deservedly high repute in its day, and it reveals its author to have been a woman of broad and humane feeling and sound judgment, and, as regards medicine, a disciple of the renowned surgeon Vaccà, in disparaging the excessive use of drugs then in vogue.

Godwin's description of Lady Mountcashel, written on the occasion of his Irish visit, is not altogether alluring ; he found her "a democrat and a republican in all their sternness, yet with no ordinary portion either of understanding or good-nature." "If any of our comic writers were to fall in her company," he adds, "the infallible consequence would be her being gibbeted in a play. She is uncommonly tall and brawny, with bad teeth, white eyes, and a handsome countenance. She commonly dresses as I have seen Mrs. Fenwick dressed out of poverty, with a grey gown and no linen visible ; but with gigantic arms, which she commonly folds, naked and exposed almost up to the shoulders."

After reading this description, it is scarcely possible for us to accept Medwin's statement (made in a marginal note to that edition of his Life of Shelley which in his latter years he annotated for republication) that "he [Shelley] told me that she

was the source of the inspiration of his 'Sensitive Plant,' and that the scene of it was laid in her garden, as unpoetical a place as could be well imagined." Medwin adds, "But a true poet can turn everything into beauty." None the less, while it may be possible for the poetic mind to create the Garden of Eden out of a cabbage-patch, we yet find it hard to follow the metamorphosis of the brawny-armed amazon, the "old woman" and the "grandmother" of the "Advice to Mothers," into "the wonder of her kind," like a "sea-flower unfolded beneath the ocean."

Claire certainly gives a more attractive picture of the woman who was to prove one of her best and staunchest friends in Italy—although she describes her some twenty years later than the white-eyed lady of the bad teeth portrayed to us by Godwin. "She was very tall," Claire writes, "of a lofty and calm presence. Her features were regular and delicate; her large blue eyes singularly well-set; her complexion of a clear pale, but yet full of life, and giving an idea of health. Her countenance beamed mildly, with the expression of a refined, cultivated, and highly cheerful mind. In all my intercourse with her I never saw the slightest symptom of the melancholy and discontent which was so striking both in Byron and Shelley."

When the Shelleys became acquainted with Mrs. Mason in Pisa, she had long been separated from Earl Mountcashel, and had resided many years in Italy in free union with Mr. George William Tighe, a cousin of the authoress of that name, of "Psyche" fame, and son of Mr. Edward Tighe, M.P., of Rossana, County Wicklow. Their union appears to

have been a happy as well as an enduring one, and they were looked up to with general respect. Two daughters—Laura and Nerina—were born to the "Masons," by which name Mr. Tighe and Lady Mountcashel were generally known.

Mr. Tighe seems to have been a very scholarly and courteous gentleman, "a most accurate and penetrating judge of human nature" Claire describes him. She also records of him in her diary that, like all the Tighe family, he spent much of his time in his library and was not frequently seen in his wife's drawing-room.

By the 2nd October, Shelley, Mary, and Claire were settled in apartments in the Palazzo Marini, 4395 Via Valfonda, in the neighbourhood of Sta. Maria Novella—a tall, narrow street, sufficiently picturesque, but which has now fallen into considerable disrepute. The Palazzo Marini was a boarding-house kept by one Madame Merveilleux du Plantis. In the early days here Shelley refers to their solitary life: "We see no one as usual," he writes to Mrs. Gisborne on the 13th of October. Reading and study were now as ever the great resource, and Claire indulged her taste and talent by taking singing-lessons. In Mary's journal, resumed a week after their arrival in Florence, she chronicles reading the Odes of Horace, Madame de Sévigné, and copying "Peter Bell." Shelley was reading Clarendon, Spenser, and Plato's "Republic." Besides books, there was also the great resource of Florence itself, with its galleries and art treasures so intimately interwoven with its life and being, an ever-open book, which Shelley now studied with expanding and increasing interest. Two years later he wrote to Mary

how deeply impressed he was with the "great difference of happiness enjoyed by those who live at a distance from these incarnations of all that the finest minds have conceived of beauty, and those who can resort to their company at pleasure."

It must indeed be remembered that in Shelley's time there was no British National Gallery, and England was practically destitute of public art collections ; and photography had not yet come to the rescue to supply in any way, and however inadequately, the deficiency. At the period of his residence in Oxford, where Shelley would have had better opportunities for studying objects of art, architecture, etc., than he had in London or elsewhere in England, he was at that stage of development when ancient and classic art, no less than ancient superstition and abuses, lie under the ban of eagerly aspiring and rebellious youth. Shelley's love of art—more especially so far as painting was concerned—was not, certainly, the discriminating love of a critic or an expert. It was the love of a poet who, while from ignorance or prejudice he may have overlooked or underrated the value of certain things, and at other times have imparted to some other inferior ones the glow and colour of his own imagination, was none the less sincere and whole-hearted in his study and love of the fine arts, as indeed he was in all things. He perceived and expressed, moreover, the truth to which so many inferior minds are blind and obstinately senseless : that in art, as in most other things, full understanding and appreciation cannot be reached without that discipline of the mind and senses which is only to be obtained by association with, and observation and study of, the best works.

In art, as in life, we learn much by experience. With what admirable and elevated humility of mind Shelley wrote from Rome : " These things are best spoken of when the mind has drunk in the spirit of their forms ; and little indeed can I, who must devote no more than a few months to the contemplation of them, hope to know or feel of their profound beauty."

To Mr. Gisborne he wrote from Florence that one of his chief objects in Italy was to observe in statuary and painting " the degree in which, and the rules according to which, that ideal beauty, of which we have so intense yet so obscure an apprehension, is realized in external forms." Shelley visited the galleries on the 13th and 20th October, so Mary notes in her diary, and on these and subsequent occasions he must have written those " Notes on Sculpture " of which he had already written a few in Rome—notes which reveal how deeply Shelley appreciated and enjoyed this branch of art. Mary also visited the Gallery (Uffizi?) on the 11th October, as recorded in her journal.

Notwithstanding his interest in these matters, and the constant flow of inspiration that was recorded by his pen, these early days in Florence—and indeed the whole of Shelley's stay there—formed a period of constant preoccupation and worry about financial complications. In December he wrote to the Gisbornes that he was busy enough, and that if his faculties " were not imprisoned within a mind whose bars are daily cares and vulgar difficulties," he might yet do something—but as it was . . .

. . . As it was he had just produced the fourth act of " Prometheus Unbound " ; yet his thoughts

were divided between such work as this, the anxiety of delayed money consignments from England (upon which the construction of a steamboat and with it the hopes and future career of Henry Reveley were supposed to depend), and the perennial and utterly hopeless and irretrievable debts and money difficulties of Godwin, to which the loss of a law-case concerning the rent of his house in Skinner Street was now added. These troubles were dealt out to the poet with unfailing insistence and regularity, accompanied by recriminations and complaints, which occasionally ruffled his saint-like patience to the intense relief and satisfaction of the reader of his biography.

Shelley suffered very acutely from all these vexations. His admiration for Godwin as a man of mind and a theoretic philosopher had not been undermined ; nor could he forget that he was Mary's father, for whom she always entertained all due sentiments of filial affection and respect. But Shelley could not by now fail to appreciate his father-in-law's character at its proper valuation ; he must at times have wished for a little less "pure reason" and a little more good feeling. He clearly perceived that, financially, Godwin was hopeless ; no amount of hard-wrung assistance would ever make him solvent. The more Shelley helped him, the larger grew his need ; the more money he sent, the more bitterly was he reproached for not sending more. "Mary is well," Shelley wrote to the Gisbornes in December— "but for this affair in London I think her spirits would be good. What shall I—what can I—what ought I to do? You cannot picture to yourself my perplexity." In the end he naturally tried to solve the difficulty by a promise of money ; but Godwin

thought the promise was, or ought to have been, for a larger sum, and it only led to further trouble later.

Shelley's interest in Reveley's steamboat project is highly characteristic of the poet, who never, in any degree, belonged to that modern type of Utopian that indignantly rebels against all rational progress of scientific development and material advance ; he ever proved himself willing and eager to assist in any scheme of practical improvement, from the days of his embryonic scientific enthusiasm in Oxford, and the Tremadoc Embankment scheme, to the ill-fated steamboat which it was projected to run between Leghorn, Genoa, and Marseilles. In the end, however, Shelley reaped much worry and some reproach over this business, while the steamboat never left the Livornese harbour—never, indeed, entered it. Henry Reveley stated later that at Shelley's desire the engine for the boat had been built on a ruinously large scale.

Shelley's letters to young Reveley and his parents, and other indications, show what a lively interest he took in this steam navigation project, and also his kindly and unassuming concern in the prospects and mental development of the young man, whose Italian education had evidently left him somewhat backward in the matter of English composition.

Meanwhile the unaccountable delay in the receipt of his money, and the fact that through some misunderstanding his bill for £200 was returned protested from England to the banker in Leghorn, caused Shelley a very anxious time. The matter was set right in due course, but communications were slow in those days, and he suffered several weeks

of keen suspense. Not till the 18th December was he able to send Reveley £100—half the money promised—and when, on the 23rd of the month, he sent the remainder to the Gisbornes, he confessed to having suffered “more pain than it would be manly to confess,” or than his friends could easily conceive, from “that wretched uncertainty about the money.”

On the 12th November a son was born to Mary—the child who had been so eagerly expected by his parents as some balm to the childless mother’s heart. “You may imagine that this is a great comfort to me, amongst all my misfortunes past, present, and to come,” Shelley wrote the next day to Hunt, after announcing the birth and Mary’s excellent progress. “Poor Mary begins to look (for the first time) a little consoled. For we have spent, as you may imagine, a miserable five months,” he adds.

The course of daily life, meanwhile, apart from plagues and anxieties dependent on others, was by no means uncongenial. After the solitude of the first few days, some agreeable acquaintances entered their circle, besides the infant who must have proved, to Mary and Claire anyway, the central attraction.

A few days before the child’s birth there arrived in Florence a connection of the Shelley family, Miss Sophia Stacey. Miss Stacey was the youngest daughter of Mr. Flint Stacey, of Sittingbourne, and on the death of her father became a ward of Mr. Parker, who had married a sister of Sir Timothy Shelley. During three years’ residence with her guardian in Bath and Brighton Miss Stacey had naturally heard much about the poet.

Miss Stacey was accompanied on her foreign

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travels by a friend, Miss Corbet Parry-Jones,¹ and two days after reaching Florence she called at the Palazzo Marini and learned that Shelley and his wife "and her friend Miss Clermont" were staying there. "He keeps his carriage, not horses, being more humane to keep fellow-creatures," Miss Stacey writes in her diary; and adds: "They see no company and live quite to themselves." On the following day, November 11th (which, by the way, Miss Stacey gives as the date of Mary's confinement), she and her friend removed to the boarding-house in the Via Valfonda, where Miss Stacey soon became intimate with the Shelleys, and Miss Jones gradually melted towards them. Her diary is just the simple, unaffected, and agreeably ingenuous record of the doings and impressions of a young English girl, abroad for the first time, and enjoying the beauty and gaiety of many foreign capitals after the tedium and decorum of Maidstone. It contains, amid the record of much frivolous amusement—balls, receptions, theatres, and excursions—numerous references to the poet, who evidently deeply impressed her imagination. She refers to many talks with him, and to his discourses on politics and religion; "his observation of the Established Church and Radicalism," and on "Love, Liberty, Death." But the entries are tantalizingly brief and often cryptic, perhaps intentionally so at times. Some entries are

¹ Dowden is mistaken in supposing Miss Stacey's companion to have been Mrs. Meadows. Mrs. Shelley refers to Miss Jones as "a little old Welshwoman without the slightest education." This description is evidently prejudiced and unfair; Miss Jones was the sister of General Sir Love-Parry Jones, of Madryn Castle, Pwllheli, and was a very cultivated woman.

made in very imperfect Italian, which language Miss Stacey studied daily with Shelley, reading together Metastasio and other Italian writers. For instance, on the 13th November the following entry occurs : "Saw Mr. Shelley : 'Louisa [Mlle. du Plantis] can you give me some paper?'—He walked on the terrace before the house with Mlle. du Plantis and Mlle. Clermont : after dinner (ho veduto il signa : lumiere del lampo—ha parlato dei sue sorelle—Devo ritornare i suoi ricordanze al Signor Parker—Di suoi avventure(?) nella sua gioventù—Gli scrittori—Inchostro. Si parlò della musica. Ha ascoltata le canzonette(?). Uomo molto interessante). . . .":

That Miss Stacey had the discernment to find Shelley a "very interesting man" is clear enough ; later she refers to him as "mysterious, yet interesting character." Like Trelawny, she was impressed by his devotion to books, which he always carried about with him. "As usual he held in his hand a book," she wrote. "Numbers of Greek books were lying about the room." "Met Mr. Shelley with his book," she notes elsewhere ; and again : "He is always reading, and at night has a little table with pen and ink, she [Mary] the same."

On the 14th November Shelley showed Miss Stacey his baby, saying "it could do no mischief now," but might some day or other be the "conqueror of provinces." It was Miss Stacey who suggested

* The Italian is very incorrect, but should apparently translate as follows : "I saw the signal : the light of the lamp. He spoke of his sisters. I am to give his regards to Mr. Parker. His adventures in youth—Authors—Ink—We talked about music—He listened to the songs [or possibly "I listened to his verses"]—A very interesting man."

Florence as the child's second name, in memory of his birthplace. On the same occasion Miss Stacey saw the portrait of little William Shelley—"the image of Lady Shelley—lovely eyes." On the day following the poet introduced her to Mary—"a sweetly pretty woman," and beautifully fair, according to Miss Stacey's description. And elsewhere she describes Mrs. Shelley as looking "very delicate and interesting."

Miss Stacey was gifted with a very sweet and well-trained voice, and while in Florence sang much and studied under "*le maître de la Cour*" Sig. Magnelli. Shelley took a keen delight in her singing, and she often sang to him, or he would come in and listen to her practising. After hearing her sing on the evening of the 17th November, he handed her the exquisite verses, "I arise from dreams of thee," having promised to write her some poetry the day before.

Florence was overflowing with fashionable English and other foreign visitors at this time, and Miss Stacey went much into society, where her personal charm and sweet voice rendered her very popular. But Shelley and Mary lived their usual retired life, going out little or not at all. On one occasion only they were present at a party given by Miss Stacey, when the usual round of society chatter was diversified by "a political discussion during tea." "Mr. Shelley praised me much," she writes, referring to her singing. A certain Mr. Grieves, who had been at college with Shelley, was present on this occasion.

On the 22nd November Shelley accompanied Miss Stacey and a Mr. Tomkins to the Uffizi Gallery, where they remained four hours, afterwards walking

in the Cascine, as the day was delightfully fine. Again on the 11th December Miss Stacey records a delightful walk in the Cascine with Mr. and Mrs. Shelley.

When the time for Miss Stacey's and Miss Jones's departure from Florence approached, Shelley very gallantly assisted the ladies by making all the necessary arrangements for their journey to Rome. On the 23rd December Miss Stacey records : "Mr. Shelley walked with me to see our carriage for Rome, and the step being high he lifted me out of the carriage. Went to the Post-Office with Mr. Shelley and he found a letter from Lady Mount-cashel for Mrs. Shelley." On Christmas Day the Shelleys dined with Miss Stacey and her friend, and on the 28th the poet handed Sophia Stacey the famous pocket-book containing "Good-Night," "Love's Philosophy," and "Time Long Past." The date on which he handed her the verses addressed to herself, beginning, "Thou art fair and few are fairer," is not recorded, but the lines are transcribed in her diary with the date December, 1819. On the 29th Miss Stacey and her friend left Florence, Shelley rising early to see them off on the road to Rome.¹

¹ Shelley gave Miss Stacey a letter of introduction to the Signora Dionigi in Rome. Although slight in matter it is, I believe, the only extant letter written by Shelley in Italian : I therefore give it from a copy in Miss Stacey's diary. The errors in Italian may be partly due to her transcription :

STIMATISSIMA SIGNORA : Appena lusingarmi [lusingomi?] che Lei si rammenta di me ; ma la bontà che ha ricevuta tutta la mia famiglia dalle sue mani, mentre che stava in Roma, mi fa sperar che non siamo intieramente dimenticati da lei. La prego di accettare

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Shelley was in very poor health during the latter part of Miss Stacey's sojourn in Florence. "He

i saluti della mia Signora Moglie, e della Signorina Clara. Speriamo che la sua salute sta sempre meglio, quanto quella delle sue amabili figli. Con questa prendo la libertà di presentarla la Signora Jones, et la Sigaorina Sofia Stacey, amiche mie, e signore Inglesi—ammiratore di tutte le belle arti, e che sapranno valere i suoi gran prezi. [pregi?] Queste Signore viaggiano per l'Italia, et m'assicuro che il suo coltissimo genio le sarà del più gran vantaggio nel istruirsi sopra le antichità di Roma. Per me mi trovo in questo momento à Firenze, ma ancora fra poco visiterò Roma. Quando allora mi farò il piacere di salutarla. Potendo servirla qui che mi comanda. Sarà servita dal mio meglio. In questa speranza, le bacio le mani.—La prego di credermi con tutta sincerità suo servo umilissimo—P. B. S.

"Firenze Xembre 1819.

"All' Illustrissima Signora
"La Signora Dionigi
"310 Corso, Roma."

The following is the English translation :

"DEAR MADAM : I hardly dare flatter myself that you remember me, but the kindness shown by you to all my family while we were in Rome makes me hope that we are not entirely forgotten by you. I beg you to accept my wife's kind greetings and those of Miss Clara. We trust your health continues better, as also that of your amiable children [daughters?].

"I hereby take the liberty to present to you Miss Jones and Miss Sophia Stacey, two English ladies, my friends—admirers of all the fine arts, and who will be able to value your great talents. These ladies are travelling in Italy, and I feel certain that your great culture will be of the utmost value to them in studying the antiquities of Rome.

"As for me, I am at this moment in Florence, but I intend shortly to visit Rome again, when I shall have the pleasure of paying my respects to you. If I can be of any service to you here, command me. I will serve you to the best of my ability. In this hope I kiss your hands.

"I beg you to believe me very sincerely your humble servant,
"P. B. S."

was suffering much from the pain in his side," she wrote on the 17th December, and on the 24th : " Mr. Shelley was talking to me when he was seized with spasms : he is in a very delicate state of health." It was evidently his intention to again visit Rome at this time ; and on the 13th November Miss Stacey notes : " Mr. Shelley's going to Venice from Rome to see Lord Byron."

Miss Stacey's impression of the poet is best given in a brief memoir, which I presume to have been written some years, perhaps many years, later, of which the following is an extract :

" From having lived three years with Mrs. Parker [Shelley's aunt] I had naturally heard much of Shelley, who took a proportionate interest in me from having known his family, and we soon became very close friends. He was at that time married to his second wife Miss Godwin, daughter of Godwin who had married Miss Wollstonecraft.

" Shelley was an admirable Italian scholar, and was kind enough to read daily with me in that language. I shall never forget his personal appearance. His face was singularly engaging, with strongly marked intellectuality. His eyes were however the most striking portion of his face, blue and large, and of a tenderness of expression unsurpassed. In his manner there was an almost childish simplicity combined with much refinement.¹

" Shelley was also passionately fond of music, but

¹ In Miss Stacey's Diary for 28 January, 1820, when she was in Naples, I find the following entry relative to a bust of Lucio Cesare in the Naples Museum : " L. Cesare like Mr. Shelley."

no executant himself. A song of mine '*Non temer, o madre amata*' was the especial favourite, also de Thierry's ballad 'Why declare how much I love thee,' and he often said he should like his friend Byron (then residing at Leghorn) ¹ to hear them, and wrote asking him over, but Byron was prevented at the time by illness from coming. On hearing me frequently play the harp, he expressed a wish to write some lines for me, and a short time afterwards he placed 'Thou art fair and few are fairer' in my hands."

Later on, from Pisa, Shelley sent Miss Stacey, together with a brief note of his own, the "Lines on a Dead Violet," on the fly-leaf of a letter from Mary. By the courtesy of Mr. Corbet Stacey Catty, the surviving son of Sophia Stacey, I am able to give this interesting letter :

" Before we received your letter, my dear Miss Stacey, which had fancied us still at Florence, we had flown to Pisa, living very quietly while you are honoured by the hands of princes and the eyes of princesses. I told you that you would find Naples more gay than any town in all Italy—than in all the world, I do believe. Rome will come like a sombre matron clothed in black after the sparkling, dancing Naples—Pensero so after Allegro—but during Holy Week a majestic Pensero so that strikes the eye, and more than Naples, if we omit the Prince

¹ Miss Stacey, and possibly Shelley also, seem to have been under some misapprehension regarding Byron's whereabouts. In the autumn of 1819 Byron was in Venice: he returned to Ravenna late in December.

of Batavia, interests the heart. I hope that you will be able to get into the Sistine Chapel. Mr. Shelley and I have a plan of going there next year when all the English will have hastened to the coronation and we shall have Rome *all to ourselves*. It was so extremely crowded when we were there that we could gain admittance to few of the fêtes. . . .

"I have just received your letter of February 28th and hasten to acknowledge the kind communication. Both Mr. Shelley and I are much concerned to hear of your ill-health. I should have thought that the divine air of Naples would have thawed the cold you got in Via Valfonda and have revived you. I never found my spirits so good since I entered upon *care* as at Naples, looking out on its delightful Bay. The sky, the shore, all its forms and the sensations it inspires, appear formed and modulated by the Spirit of Good alone unalloyed by any evil. Its temperature and fertility would, if men were free from evil, render it a faery habitation of delight—but as a Neapolitan said of it, '*E' un Paradiso abitato dai diavoli!*' But Rome is formed by men—a city in the midst of a desert, its associations and being are entirely human. Its hills are mole-hills even when compared with the low Apennines of Naples, but they are giants to us which once bestrode the world. Many of them are formed alone by the ruins of materials brought there by man. And the Coliseum is his masterpiece. But a truce to Rome. It is my *hobby-horse*, and as it is only a stupid wooden fellow that cannot carry me thither, he must needs stay in his stable if he will not alter his course. I hope you will go to Paestum,

and in doing that you will have done more than many of our English Butterflies do—and it is ten to one if you get there without some fearful adventure. The inhabitants are so savage—clothed in rough sheep-skins with wolfish hearts, and no sweet outsides—a bridge also that has been building these twenty years and is not finished! We walked from that broken bridge to Paestum and returned in a cart drawn by oxen. . . .

"We are much flattered by your affectionate remembrances and desires to see us—a desire entirely sympathized with by us. We shall remain here stationary until the end of May, when Mr. S. is ordered to the Baths of Lucca, where we shall accordingly pass the summer—I am afraid that it does not accord with your plans, *bella Sofia*, to pass it there likewise: will not you also be one of the swallows to return to see his new most excellent and most gracious majesty crowned? Alas, but a few days ago he was but a good-for-nothing prince—bankrupt in character—but the crown that encircles the mortal temples of a king has regenerated him.

"Let the friend of the Courier forgive my radicalism in favour of my being hers very affectionately,

"MARY SHELLEY"

In a postscript, followed by the well-known lines, "On a Dead Violet," Shelley adds :

"I promised you what I cannot perform ; a song on singing :—there are only two subjects remaining. I have a few old stanzas on one which though simple and rude, look as if they were dictated by the heart.

And so—if you tell no one *whose* they are, you are welcome to them."

The verses follow, after which he adds :

"Pardon these dull verses from one who is dull—but who is not the less ever yours, P. B. S.

"When you come to Pisa continue to see us—Casa Frassi, Lung' Arno."

A Mr. Tomkins, an accomplished linguist and amateur portrait painter, also formed one of the Via Valfonda household. On the 7th January, and again two days later, Shelley sat to this gentleman for his portrait, in a fur-collared coat, with bare neck as usual, so Dowden was informed in 1884 by Mr. Tomkins' daughter ; the sketch has unfortunately been lost. One evening Shelley accompanied Mr. Tomkins to the theatre, and the latter seized the opportunity to suggest to him that by way of an antidote against the coldness of his compatriots residing in Florence the poet should prove himself more worthy of their regard by taking the Sacrament at the English Embassy : advice which, however well-intended it may have been, Shelley did not see fit to follow.

Charles Clairmont, who accompanied his sister and the Shelleys to Florence from Leghorn, left for Vienna towards the middle of November. It appears from a letter of Shelley to Mrs. Gisborne that Claire had intended accompanying him there before the end of October ; but she did not carry out this project till some years later.

Besides the lovely lyrics already mentioned, some of Shelley's finest and most important works were written in Florence : notably the humorous and satirical "Peter Bell the Third," the fourth act of

"Prometheus Unbound," in which the emancipation of the human mind and will is hymned in a rapture of lyrical delight, and the magnificent "Ode to the West Wind." This wonderful ode of autumnal death—or life in death—of destructive energy and reawakening life, this vision of the west wind that scatters the leaves of the dead year that it may thus quicken the life of the new, so deeply impregnated with the sad and sensitive, yet hopeful and rebellious, spirit of the poet, was conceived and chiefly written, as he tells us in his note to the poem, "in a wood that skirts the Arno, near Florence, and on a day when that tempestuous wind, whose temperature is at once mild and animating, was collecting the vapours which pour down the autumnal rains." Early in November, Shelley wrote of the famous Florentine acacia wood: "I like the Cascine very much, where I often walk alone, watching the leaves, and the rising and falling of the Arno." It was probably in these early November days that he composed his poem, for with the advance of winter in Florence, as all who have lived there well know, and as Shelley himself found out later to his cost, the wind may be animating to the hardy, but it is anything but mild.

In writing to Miss Curran in November, Shelley referred to a projected return to Rome in the spring; but both this and his idea of travelling to London were later abandoned, though the severity of the Florentine winter determined them to leave the city as early as possible. Until the descent of the bitter *tramontano* winds the climate of Florence proved altogether beneficial to the poet. "I have better health than I have known for a long time," he wrote

to Henry Reveley on the 18th December—"ready for any stormy cruise"; and at first he welcomed the inroads of winter, despite the recurrence with it of the mysterious pain in his side which had so often occasioned him trouble, because it afforded him relief from an obstinate "summer indisposition" in the nature of dysentery, which had long caused him trouble and some alarm to Mary. But when the Florentine cold began in real earnest, it proved too much for Shelley's endurance. His "Calderonisation" on the climate is well known—"an epic of rain, with an episode of frost, and a few similes concerning fine weather."

"Tuscany is delightful eight months of the year," he wrote to his cousin Tom Medwin, on the 17th January, "but nothing reconciles me to the slightest indication of winter, much less such infernal cold as my nerves have been racked upon for the last ten days." The frost, indeed, was unusually long and severe, but on the 16th January the spell of severe cold was succeeded by a sudden and rapid thaw. It was decided to seize this opportunity to travel by boat on the Arno to Pisa, a decision which Shelley announced to Mr. Gisborne on the 25th January. On the morning of the 26th, at eight o'clock, the party embarked. Claire's journal gives a brief account of the journey :

"Mr. and Mrs. Meadows and Zoide walk with us to the side of the Arno, where we begin our navigation. The weather was at first very severe, a keen wind blowing all the time. The banks of the Arno are very beautiful, somewhat like those of the Rhine, but of a much softer character. We see hills the whole length of our course, now hang-

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ing over the river, and now receding in long green valleys to meet others. We arrived at Empoli about two, having done thirty miles in five hours. There we landed and took carriage for Pisa, which city we reached about six at night. We lodge at the Tre Donzelle."

CHAPTER XI

EARLY IMPRESSIONS OF PISA—THE VACCAS AND OTHER PISAN NOTABILITIES—MRS. GISBORNE'S DIARY IN LONDON—PLOTS AND CALUMNIES AGAINST SHELLEY—HIS DIGNIFIED ATTITUDE

In his early years Shelley had been peculiarly addicted to settling on some desirable locality to "live there for ever"—only to flit elsewhere after the lapse of a few weeks. His imagination and desire, at such moments, measured time by ages, while his restless activity and impatience of change measured it by instants. In this he was the direct opposite of Byron, who was for ever projecting moves and changes, and journeyings hither and thither, but who, in practice, evinced a distinct tendency to take root in any congenial soil, and rapidly to tie himself with attachments of one kind or another.

Pisa, as we have already seen, did not make a happy first impression on Shelley, and when he returned there early in 1820, he can certainly have had little idea that it was to prove his most abiding dwelling-place in Italy—that, indeed, with the exception of occasional brief changes for climatic reasons, he was destined to remain there till near the date of his death. A year and a half later he wrote to Mary that their roots had never struck so deeply as at Pisa; and here, despite many draw-

backs, they spent many of the most agreeable hours and weeks that Fate accorded them in Italy or anywhere.

The principal attractions presented by Pisa were its mild climate, the renowned excellence of its water, and the presence there of the famous surgeon Andrea Vaccà Berlinghieri, of whose advice Mrs. Mason urgently counselled the poet to avail himself. The neighbourhood of the Masons themselves was also a considerable attraction.

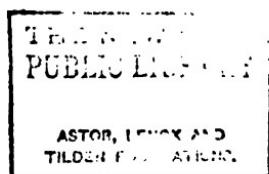
Andrea Vaccà Berlinghieri, born in 1766, belonged to a distinguished family, of ancient though not noble origin—one of those families whose influence engendered that sentiment of civil equality which the Medici were unable to extinguish, and which was responsible for the civilization and toleration that distinguished the little state of Tuscany from all others, even before the period of the French Revolution.

The surgeon's father, Francesco, was the son of an eminent provincial physician of Buti; born in 1732, he became professor of surgery at the Pisa University; he also devoted himself to medicine, and was an opponent of Cullen and Brown, and a precursor of Milman in the study of malignant diseases. His fame was not confined to Italy, and he received many honours, his services being solicited by the King of Poland among others.

Francesco had three sons, all of them learned and worthy men. The eldest, Leopoldo, was a natural philosopher and mathematician; Andrea came second; while Giuseppe, the youngest, was a lawyer and an excellent musician. Leopoldo and Andrea at a very early age were sent to study in



CITADEL. PISA



Paris, Giuseppe to Rome. They returned later to their native land, and were University Professors contemporaneously with their father.

At the time of the French invasion the Vaccàs, father and sons, embraced with enthusiasm the new ideas. Andrea, it may be mentioned, had taken part in the storming of the Bastille when in Paris. Thus, when the reaction supervened, the sons were forced to emigrate, and the father was put on his trial, but was treated with characteristic Tuscan leniency.

Leopoldo Vaccà became a soldier, and experienced the fortunes of war throughout Napoleon's campaigns ; he wrote on military matters, and married a French woman of Toulon ; he died on returning to his native country under particularly painful and dramatic circumstances. Giuseppe had preceded him, dying in 1803, after enduring the hardships and fatigues of the Siege of Genoa, where he had been immured with Massena.

Andrea survived and outshone the considerable fame of his father. After studying in Paris under Desault, he travelled in England with his brother Leopoldo, and there attended Cullen's lectures. He obtained his medical degree in 1793, after which he took arms in the uprisings in favour of the French, and after the first restoration in 1799 was, as we have seen, compelled to emigrate. Having medically attended General Ollivier, who was wounded at the Battle of the Trebbia at Genoa, he followed him to Paris and there completed the cure. In Paris he practised surgery with much financial success and renown, and further prosecuted his studies. At the end of the year 1800 he returned to his native Pisa, where he was appointed Professor of Surgery

at the University ; he took a leading part in the reform of medical studies in Tuscany, where his fame as a teacher procured him large numbers of pupils and patients. Dupin hailed him as a great reformer of surgery. He wrote many notable works in Italian and Latin, and was offered the Professorship of Surgery at the famous Pavia University, which he declined.

Andrea Vaccà Berlinghieri was a very handsome man of refined and elegant tastes ; he was an excellent horseman—owner of fine Arab horses—and devoted much of his leisure *con amore* to agriculture. He was, moreover, an amateur of the fine arts, and erected a fine monument to his father in one of his villas. He cultivated letters, delighted in literary discussions, and was an assiduous frequenter of Madame de Staël's *salon*, when, in 1816, she spent several months in Pisa. In 1809, by special dispensation of the Pope, Vaccà married Sophie Cauderon, the beautiful widow of his brother Leopoldo, a woman of superior character and intellect.

When Shelley came to Pisa in 1820 Vaccà was at the zenith of his renown. In his diary for 1817 Dr. John Polidori records that an Austrian colonel, in his enthusiasm for Vaccà's treatment, designated him the *Dio della Medicina*. He appears to have diagnosed Shelley's sufferings as largely due to nervous causes, and recommended as sole treatment for his ailments the discontinuance of all the noxious drugs inflicted on him by other doctors, and the pursuance of a natural and healthy mode of life.

Pisa must have presented in 1820 much the same general character which distinguishes it to-day, that

of an important city, decayed and depopulated, a city of slumbering learning and greatness, lacking vital energy and animation, lulled by a relaxing climate, with its green-shuttered houses "sleeping," as Leigh Hunt put it, on the banks of its river. The contrast is always the more remarkable after the *chiasso*—the noise and somewhat futile bustle of Florence. The city was, however, in much higher repute as a health resort, and more frequented by foreigners, in Shelley's time than it is in our day, though the native population was much smaller. It was more especially patronized by consumptives—a fact which is still unhappily apparent from the traces this disease has left among the inhabitants of Pisa. The permanent population was then at a low ebb ; its hundred and twenty thousand reputed inhabitants of the time of the Republic had diminished to eighteen thousand. To-day the number is considerably increased.

Despite the city's somewhat sleepy aspect the University of Pisa was in considerable repute in the early years of the nineteenth century, and was frequented by students from all parts of Italy and from Greece and Corsica. Besides Vaccà, the natural philosopher Pacchiani (with whom later on Shelley and his circle became acquainted) was in considerable repute here. Giovanni Carmignani, who followed in the footsteps of Beccaria, and who by his treatise on the *Elementa Juris Criminalis* did so much to reform the entire penal code of Tuscany, which had remained pretty well stationary since the Middle Ages, was another among the lights of the Pisan University.

When Shelley came to live in Pisa in January,

1820, Walter Savage Landor had already been settled there one year. It is curious and sad to note that the two men never met. Claire, in her journal for the 5th May, refers to "Walter Savage Landor, who will not see a single English person ; says he is glad the country produces people of worth, but he will have nothing to do with them." His reasons for declining to meet Shelley were, however, of a more definite and deplorable kind. By (Sir James?) Mackintosh, and also possibly by his dear friend Southey (though it is not definitely recorded) Landor had been duly informed of the many heinous crimes laid to Shelley's account, which still remain to the poet's credit, more particularly those which circulated round the tragedy of his first marriage. These stories had so far prejudiced Landor against Shelley that he positively declined to meet him. In later life, when Landor had learnt to love Shelley the man, not less than Shelley the poet, he bitterly and unavailingly regretted this error. "I blush in anguish at my prejudice and injustice," he then wrote.

But thus the fact remains, that these two poets, who with all their differences yet had so much in common, and whose very writings while they were both in Pisa, each from his own standpoint and in its own kind, had, in more than one instance, a common incentive and purpose, lived the better part of two years in the little Tuscan city without ever exchanging a word, perhaps never a look, for there is no record of their having met, however casually. Walter Savage Landor's "Corinth" and the noble "Regeneration" were written in Pisa under the same influences and impressions which inspired Shelley's "Hellas" and the "Ode to Naples." Landor left

Pisa in September, 1821, shortly before Byron took up his residence there.

During the first year and a half of his residence in Pisa, before the arrival of Lord Byron, and of that brilliant and romantic company of which these two formed the centre, Shelley's life was as quiet and studious as ever, if not altogether solitary. Reading, writing, and study were the poet's principal occupations—the Bible (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel), Plato, Eschylus, Virgil, and Shakespeare were among his readings. Claire, despite her anxiety and distress about Allegra, was engaged with lessons in singing and dancing; and Mary, undisturbed by the presence of Percy Florence (who by the way bore a very high character as a baby), assisted Shelley in translating Spinoza, writing from his dictation—a work they had begun together in Florence, where, also, after some hope and energy had been reinfused into her by the birth of her baby, she had commenced study and research for her historical novel "Castruccio, Prince of Lucca," later on published as "Valperga." Mathematical studies, which, in February, Shelley announced that he and Mary were about to take up, seem to have come to little or nothing. Agriculture, of which he wrote to the Gisbornes a little later that he was "thinking, talking, and reading" (an ephemeral enthusiasm for which Vaccà may possibly have been responsible), probably shared a similar fate.

Shelley's first resting-place in Pisa, as previously in 1818, was the then famous Albergo delle Tre Donzelle, the best-reputed inn in the town, where all foreigners stayed *en passant*. This inn was situated on the Lung' Arno Regio, and was kept by a

Piedmontese, Signor Peverada, by whose name the hotel and café are still remembered by many. It has, since some fifteen years, changed hands and further changed its name, being transformed into the present Grand Hotel.

After a short stay here, the party removed to Casa Frassi, a modest house, farther along the Lung' Arno near the Piazza di S. Niccola.

During the early months in Pisa, Shelley wrote the "Sensitive Plant," the "Ode to Liberty," the "Vision of the Sea," and the wondrously imaginative "Cloud."

Quiet and retired as was their life during these early months in Pisa, the Shelleys were not, as we have seen, entirely without friends—the Masons at the Casa Silva in the Via Mala Gonnella, on the south side of the Arno, Professor Vaccà, and, in the not distant neighbourhood of Leghorn, the Gisbornes and Henry Reveley formed a congenial if not very large circle.

Shortly before leaving for England on a journey connected mostly with business matters—an absence which lasted from the beginning of May till the autumn—the Gisbornes visited their friends in Pisa. Here, in Shelley's house (so we learn from Claire's diary) the Gisbornes renewed their acquaintance with Vaccà, whom they had known many years previously when Henry was a student at the Pisa University. Claire recalls "a very profound and atheistical conversation between him [Vaccà] and S., la Signora Mary, and il Signore Giovanni [Gisborne], not unmixed with joy at an interview, after ten years' absence, with his old and liberal friends." It was Mary's hope that Mrs. Gisborne might be able to remain in Pisa

as their guest during the absence of her husband and son in England, but this plan could not be carried out, and on the 2nd May the Gisbornes and Henry Reveley set out on their journey. Their departure tolled the knell for the ill-fated steamboat enterprise, in which poor Shelley had taken such a keen and generous interest, and in which he had so unprofitably invested what represented to him a considerable, indeed a ruinously large, sum of money. Most unselfishly he urged the Gisbornes, when detained in England, and when interests of one kind and another seemed to render their return to Italy unadvisable, to consider only their own interests and Henry's, and in no way to trouble about his (Shelley's) loss in the matter. When the Gisbornes and Henry were still in Italy, Shelley had urged that in Henry's interest the steamboat enterprise should not be abandoned ; he now insisted that the young man should not return on its account if, as he believed, it was rather to his advantage to remain in England. At the same time Shelley offered, in case they should decide to remain abroad, to attend, on their behalf, to the sale of their property in Leghorn. "I will cast off my habitual character," he promises, "and attend to the minutest details." Later on, after the Gisbornes' return to Italy, Shelley thought he had cause to be deeply aggrieved by their conduct in abandoning the steamboat, and wrote of them in very abusive terms.

In the Gisbornes' unpublished diary, covering the period of their sojourn in London, Mrs. Gisborne notes several visits to the Godwins and Hunts, and refers to their talks about Shelley and Claire.

Godwin, that monstrous hybrid between Pecksniff

and Micawber, still exercised his forensic ability in abuse of his son-in-law, though his slow and correct manner of talking, with frequent parentheses, did not always allow him to get in all he wanted to say during his limited *tête-à-têtes* with Mrs. Gisborne. However, he found the opportunity to talk much about Shelley's "cruel and unjust" treatment of himself ; his "equivocal, unmanly, unintelligible manner" ; his "love of novelty," and consequent inclination to take up a cause with enthusiasm and drop it when the novelty had worn off ; when he had "had time to cool upon it," as Mrs. Godwin put it. And while he allowed Shelley high mental endowments and a heart disposed to do good, he declared him to possess neither constancy nor perseverance. On one occasion Godwin declared there was "as much mystery in Shelley's conduct as in the writings of Coleridge."

Godwin's special cause for offence at this time was the alleged deficiency of Shelley's disbursements over the Skinner St. entanglement, rather than any shortcomings in his morals or general conduct. He declared that, when in October, 1819, his son-in-law came to his assistance over the accumulated rent of the limpet's rock, Shelley had promised him a lump sum of £500, which promise Shelley stoutly denied ever having made ; he had, in fact, pledged himself to pay certain quarterly instalments of £50 each, the payment of which was somehow delayed, much to the poor philosopher's dismay and disappointment. Shelley, in the summer of 1820, induced Horace Smith to advance Godwin £100, but a further effort on his part to induce Mr. Gisborne to advance on his behalf £400 proved unsuccessful.

On the 7th August, 1820, Shelley wrote to Godwin from the Bagni di Pisa a very determined and sensible letter, in which he at last declared his inability and his unwillingness to be further bled in this unmerciful and futile way. He was obliged, with Mary's consent, to exercise his discretion about keeping her father's letters from her knowledge, as the effect they produced on her was a dangerous matter now she was giving suck to her child, "in whose life, after the frightful events of the last two years, her own seems wholly to be bound up." A recent letter of Godwin's, so Shelley writes, had produced through the mother's agitation a disorder in the child of the same kind as that which had killed little Clara two years previously. Godwin was wont to refer to this as a scurrilous letter, and did not apparently abate his persecutions; but Mary was now in some degree protected from them, and Shelley was left to bear the whole brunt.

On her side, Mrs. Godwin—with more show of logic on her part, at least, than her husband could claim—appears to have concentrated all her ill-feeling on Mary Shelley, whom she regarded as responsible for all her misery in the estrangement from, and misfortunes of, her own daughter. She was indeed so shocked to hear that Mrs. Gisborne admired and was attached to Mary Shelley, that she could no longer endure to see her—though anxious in every way to manifest her goodwill towards Mrs. Gisborne herself.

Mrs. Godwin naturally inquired of the Gisbornes with deep interest concerning Claire, and was reassured by Mrs. Gisborne that her conduct was "decorous and cheerful"—that the circumstances of

her life, though partially, were not generally known, but in danger of being rendered more public through the villainy of Paolo ; that Clare herself was desirous of concealment, and that no attachment at that date existed between herself and . . . [Lord Byron].

On the 25th June Mrs. Gisborne spent the evening with Coleridge, and was struck with his changed appearance and "immense size." "We mentioned Mr. Shelley," she writes ; "he said he had never met him, nor had he read any of his works, but that he judged from Southey's account of him, who knew him as a youth, that he possessed much genius ; he thought him a very wicked character and had heard of his barbarous usage of his first wife, but allowed of the possibility of misrepresentation ; he mentioned the album, and observed that charity would induce us to attribute that to insanity." This must evidently refer to the incident when Shelley wrote *aθεος* in the album at Montanvert.

On all hands in London the reports of Shelley's atrocities were rife—a state of things for which the vile anonymous attack against his character in the *Quarterly Review* for April, 1819, must have been largely responsible. Mr. Fenwick, whom the Gisbornes knew in London, had heard "a very bad character" of Shelley (probably from Charles Lamb) ; he was, however, "staggered in his opinion" on hearing in what high esteem and with what deep affection his friends the Gisbornes regarded him—"there was not a person in the world they preferred to him"—and he was much impressed by the facts they brought forward in his defence.

Mrs. Gisborne's diary reveals altogether a woman

of much sense and sensibility, quite in accordance with the impression Shelley gives in his occasional references to her. She soon tired of what she saw of "elegant" life in London, and protests that she can see no reason why nature and refinement should be incompatible with one another.

The "P." referred to in Mrs. Gisborne's diary in the summer of 1820—the same servant Paolo mentioned by Shelley in writing to his wife from Florence in 1818—gave the Shelleys considerable trouble at this time, and was the cause of even more serious annoyance to them later.

This despicable rascal availed himself of the mysterious circumstance to which I have referred, of Shelley's connection with some little girl in Naples—his "Neapolitan charge"—to concoct a tale of an infamous and mendacious kind, which apparently attributed the parentage of the child to Shelley and Claire Clairmont—a vile slander which was to crop up later on, and by threatening to charge Shelley with which he now hoped to extract some money from him. Shelley was scarcely the man to be intimidated in this manner, however, and he promptly put the matter in the hands of an attorney in Leghorn, Avv. Federico Del Rosso. It was in connection with this business that Shelley and his party migrated in mid-June for some weeks to the Gisbornes' Casa Ricci in that town. Paolo was apparently silenced for the time. In June Shelley wrote to the Gisbornes announcing the death of the little girl, in Naples, whom he had been on the point of receiving in Leghorn. "My Neapolitan charge is dead," he wrote. "It seems as if the destruction that is consuming me were as an atmo-

sphere which wrapt and *infected* everything connected with me. The rascal Paolo has been taking advantage of my situation at Naples in 1818 to attempt to extort money by threatening to charge me with the most horrible crimes. He is connected with some English here, who hate me with a fervour that almost does credit to their phlegmatic brains, and listen to and vent the most prodigious falsehoods. 'An ounce of civet, good apothecary, to sweeten this dunghill of a world.' Who Shelley's English slanderers may have been I know not; but both he and Mary speak in their letters of Paolo's accomplices.

The famous—or infamous—article in the *Quarterly Review*, though it appeared in the number for April, 1819, was not seen by Shelley till October of that year, when he came across it at Delesert's Reading Room in Florence, as described to Medwin by Lord Dillon, and recorded in Medwin's biography. This article, which would have done some credit to the pen of the dismissed servant blackmailer, though professedly a review of the "Revolt of Islam," was in fact little more than a slanderous attack on the poet's life, which, the reviewer confidently asserted, did he but choose to draw the veil, would present "indeed a disgusting picture." Shelley was inclined to attribute this article to Southey, though in point of fact it emanated from the slimy pen of John Taylor Coleridge. In the *Examiner* for September and October, Leigh Hunt took up the cudgels in his friend's defence, and vouched, from personal knowledge, for the purity, simplicity, and virtue of the poet's life.

From Casa Ricci, Shelley, no doubt pained and

nauseated by so much public and private injustice and infectious calumny, wrote to Southey a letter dictated rather by personal feeling towards Southey himself than by any idea of seeking public vindication. He begged Southey to tender him the assurance that he was not the author of the article in question, Shelley's own conviction being, he declared, that his old friend and host of Greta Hall could not be his defamer. Southey answered explicitly denying the authorship of the article in question ; but seized the opportunity of impugning in his letter the pernicious tendency of Shelley's writings, and of his opinions, which he averred to have led to guilt and misery. A somewhat lengthy correspondence ensued, during which Shelley severely and powerfully criticized Southey's system of gratuitous judgments, and his Christian interpretation of human justice and charity.

This was one of the very rare instances in his life in which Shelley sought to defend himself against calumnious attacks. In general he treated them with silent contempt, or indifference above contempt.

Never indeed did poet, or any man whose eminence attracted the poisonous arrows of envy and calumny, treat slanderous abuse and insulting criticism with more dignified indifference and superiority of judgment than Shelley did. It is a matter for the deepest admiration and some wonder that one who in many ways was so sensitive in private life, should have been so tough and hardy in resisting all public and private attacks. He was at times disgusted and nauseated to the verge of pain ; he laughed momentary laughter which may have bordered on tears, but the calm stream of his conscience was

merely ruffled on the surface by the foul breath of his detractors ; deeper down it remained unper-
turbed, and no mud could be stirred from its depths.

In his letter to the Editor of the *Quarterly*, written a little later than the Southey correspon-
dence, in which he defended Keats and "Endymion," Shelley alludes to the slanderous paper which they had published against him, but he refuses to take serious notice of an anonymous attack, and admits that he had derived much innocent mirth—"exquisite entertainment"—from certain parts of it. "Seriously speaking," he continues, "I am not in the habit of permitting myself to be disturbed by what is said or written of me, though, I dare say, I may be condemned sometimes justly enough. But I feel, in respect to the writer in question, that 'I am there sitting, where he durst not soar.'"

Slight as this notice of the slander was, Shelley never either sent or even finished it. With all justice he could counsel the "Reviewer" in the verses he addressed to him—no doubt this same reviewer of the *Quarterly*—to conquer the hatred he could not satiate on one who would not answer hatred with hatred :

"There is no sport in hate, where all the rage
Is on one side . . ."

he wrote. When a boy he was often goaded into tears and fury by the persecutions of his school-fellows. As a man he learned the rare wisdom of indifference—an indifference which it no doubt cost his delicate nature some struggle to attain.

To fame Shelley was not indifferent. No man

who has no definite belief in a future life of the soul beyond this known world of ours, unless he be an utter pessimist or totally devoid of ambition, can be indifferent to the only kind of immortality that remains to him—the immortality, such as it is, of Homer, of Dante, and of Shakespeare. Shelley was not indifferent, and though *au fond* he was cognizant of his own worth, and saw with lucid vision into the heights and depths of his own soul, he was yet at times subject to depression and discouragement, on perceiving how few of his contemporaries noticed or cared for the gifts he bestowed on them.

Medwin tells us that he had at times a foreboding of coming greatness, and would quote Milton's words : "This I know, that whether in prosing or in versing, there is something in my writings that shall live for ever." But there were moments also when he spoke of its being useless for him to write : none read his works. The critics, for the most part, saw in them merely an excuse to pillory his private life—for them the author of the "Revolt of Islam" had not written an immortal poem, he had merely lived a "disgusting" life ; the poet of "Prometheus Unbound" had produced nothing but a noxious compound of "blasphemy and sensuality." In one of his pencilled notes to his Life of Shelley, intended for republication, Medwin tells us that at times Shelley suspected that he was "unprofitably wasting his energies, that produce what he might, he was doomed to be unread." "I write little now," he told his friend John Gisborne, towards the close of his life. "It is impossible to compose except under the strong excitement of an assurance of finding sympathy in what you write. Imagine

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Demosthenes reciting a philippic to the waves of the Atlantic." Byron had been more fortunate, he added, without envy.

No doubt this also would have proved but a passing phase of discouragement, and had not the waters of the Mediterranean closed over his head, the shallow waters of the world's passing indifference and injustice would never have stifled his voice.

CHAPTER XII

MARY AND CLAIRE—BYRON AND THE GUICCIOLI—ALLEGRA

IT is unfortunately impossible to write of Shelley's life without touching from time to time on its less agreeable domestic aspect. Dissensions at home must have been more continuously harassing to the poet than any injustice or calumny without can have been, and it is, unhappily, a fact that the poet of the "Witch of Atlas" and the "Ode to the Skylark," the "blithe spirit," so free in its own retreats from the leaden weight of the chains of our everyday mortality, was never immune from troubles of this kind. He himself said that his faculties were imprisoned within a mind whose bars were daily cares and vulgar difficulties. And certainly the constant state of jar and discord prevailing between Mary Shelley and Claire, which is revealed in their journals and letters—and which, even without these, would indeed still be a conjectural certainty in consideration of their characters and circumstances—must have been a perennial source of annoyance and distress to the poet, when more apparently portentous cares were not opposing him.

Of the character of the two women who were Shelley's most constant companions for many years,

something may be judged from their own actions and writings, and from the accounts given of them by those who knew them.

Intellectually, Mary was no doubt the more solid and well-poised, and in character also she was more to be depended on—more reasonable, more reflective, and more correct. After her first rebellious and rash plunge in life, when she set convention and more than convention at naught to join her lot with Shelley's, she appears to have acted in a consistently decorous and even conventional manner. By Edward John Trelawny, and not by Trelawny alone, she has indeed been accused of an undue degree of subservience to the opinion of the world. It is only fair to Mary to say that this impression was rather the fruit of Trelawny's later than of his early experience of her—his impression of Mary, Shelley's widow, who had to contend single-handed against the world's and Sir Timothy's prejudice, rather than of the poet's wife in her younger days, when he stood at her side to inspire and support her. But the tendency was no doubt always present, and only required developing. "Mary was the most conventional slave I ever met," Trelawny wrote in his later years. "She even affected the pious dodge, such was her yearning for society." He describes also in his "Records" how poor Shelley was occasionally the victim of these not uncommon female traits in her character, when he "bore what he could and suffered what he must." On the whole, Mary's defects seem to have been on the side of coldness, conventionality, and jealousy. Together with certain fine moral and intellectual qualities which she inherited from her mother, and from her father also,

she was not immune from Godwin's less admirable traits, which occasioned so much inconsistency in his private life. Yet, while we sympathize with Shelley's generosity as regards Claire, we also appreciate his wife's exasperation. No mortal woman could have borne the situation with equanimity, however unselfish she might be, however devoid of jealousy or worldliness.

Claire was a very bright, pretty, lively, witty girl, prettier and more attractive than Mary no doubt, with a tendency to exercise her wit in a spiteful and aggravating manner; much given to exaggerated and fanciful states of feeling—a little hysterical in fact—and never over-careful of the truth. She was the daughter of a commonplace and untruthful woman, by whom she had in all likelihood been spoiled in childhood, and unduly favoured in relation to Mary. The unbounded antipathy with which Byron regarded her cannot have been entirely without cause or excuse, however unkind or ungenerous it may have been. He never so rapidly or so violently disliked any other woman.

Mary repeatedly throughout her married life expressed her unhappiness at being constantly domesticated with Claire. In her journal for the early months of 1815 she comments on Claire's want of resolution. "Without firmness understanding is impotent," she writes. Shelley at an even earlier period remarks on her "insensibility and incapacity for the slightest degree of friendship," and regrets his own propensity to plunge too rashly and unreflectingly into attachments. "Beware of weakly giving way to trivial sympathies," he writes.

Yet while not blind to Claire's weaknesses of

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character, to her irresolution, lack of solid judgment, and occasional inconsistency, Shelley appears to have been genuinely attached to her throughout. His letters are at times a little exaggerated in their expressions of affection, but not more than was natural under the circumstances with a man of Shelley's warm-hearted and expansive nature towards a near connection as unhappy and dependent as Claire. Claire's own account of Shelley's feelings towards, and opinion of, her, in an early letter to Lord Byron (spring, 1816), is interesting. Byron at this early stage in their intimacy (they had apparently known each other personally only a few days) had already called her "a little fiend." Impressed by this uncomplimentary appellation, she appealed to Shelley's judgment, which she represents to have been given as follows : " My sweet Child, there are two Clares—one of them I should call irritable if it were not for the nervous disorder, the effects of which you still retain : the nervous Clare is reserved and melancholy and more sarcastic than violent ; the good Clare is gentle yet cheerful ; and to me the most engaging of human creatures ; one thing I will say for you, that you are as easily managed by the person you love as the reed is by the wind ; it is your weak side."

Shelley no doubt felt somewhat painfully Mary's hostility towards Claire, and on his side tried to make amends for it. From the summer morning, in 1814, when he very foolishly permitted, encouraged, or persuaded Claire Clairmont to rebel against " domestic tyranny " and leave her mother's roof to accompany Mary and himself in their flight, he remained consistently her best friend, protector, and

counsellor. Of her first steps in the Byron intrigue he probably knew nothing at the time: it is uncertain how much he may have seen of her or known of her movements at the period. When he did learn of it he acted consistently and as a man of good feeling. He did not, like a second Godwin, act a disapproval which he could not consistently feel; though had he then possessed more experience, or rather understanding, of life, of Claire, and of Byron, he and Mary were certainly not bound to regard the relations of these two in precisely the same light as their own. It is sheer nonsense to pretend (as one biographer in particular has done) that there was no difference between the two things, and that Claire must have felt certain of Mary's approval and sympathy in her intrigue, because Mary had herself acted in the same manner. Mary had done nothing of the kind. Dispensing with a ceremony which was at the time impossible, and which she did not then regard as obligatory, she threw in her lot with Shelley's for better or worse. She was by nature distinctly a monogamist, and she took life and her marital relations in all seriousness. Shelley's point of view was a little different from Mary's, but still farther removed from Byron's. He was not strictly a monogamist; and though singularly immune from the grosser passions, and regarding love as an attribute of the mind rather than of the senses, he can scarcely be considered constant in his loves and affections. He required frequent change of that sympathy and influence which was what he principally required and demanded in women.

Now, Claire's intrigue with Byron, though its

results were enduring, was not of a very serious or lasting nature on either side. Byron, at the time, was a pleasure-loving man of the world, with no real respect or esteem for women : Claire an ignorant and enterprising young girl in search of unknown emotions, swayed mostly by undigested sentiment and ideas, and impatient curiosity. Attacking Byron under different pseudonyms before revealing her real identity, she made love to him and "threw herself upon his mercy" before she had ever seen him ! She was another victim of the prevailing Byronomania. "I'd like to know who has been carried off except poor dear me," Byron wrote to Hoppner later, when accused by rumour of having abducted la Guiccioli. He could say so with equal truth with regard to Claire, who assured him that time would prove that she could love gently and with affection, and that she was "incapable of anything approaching to the feeling of revenge or malice." He, not unnaturally, did very quickly tire of such feelings as he may have had for her, and when he found that she was, after all, very well capable of nurturing feelings of revenge and malice, and of spiteful sarcasm, he grew to loathe her. Claire never behaved with much common sense, consistency, or dignity throughout ; and the existence of her child so complicated matters that it rendered it very difficult for her to do so. Mary, in all likelihood, disapproved of her conduct, and regarded it as light and foolish, and even immoral—though Claire no doubt represented Byron as having taken the initiative in their relations, and therefore as wholly or principally to blame for the situation.

Shelley, with his sublime generosity, was willing

to adopt Claire's child and Claire herself, notwithstanding the financial and domestic burden, and the slanders it gave rise to, just as he adopted the debts and burdens of his father-in-law and friends. It was sufficient that Claire was poor and unprotected for him to keep his heart and door perpetually open to her : the fact that she was or had been rather foolish only increased her need of his help. Her approaching motherhood, when revealed, and the birth of Allegra, threw her more than ever on his protection. It was Mary who, after this event, so strongly urged the necessity of getting Allegra—little Alba as she was at first called—to Italy, and to the care and guardianship of her father, a step against which it appears that Shelley even at the eleventh hour warned Claire. The ambiguous position which the presence of Allegra occasioned was not less painful to Mary than the continual presence of Allegra's mamma ; and she probably trusted that once having disposed of the infant, Claire might follow it, or take herself off elsewhere. But the months dragged on in Italy, and Claire still remained as the perpetual third. What Shelley had suffered from the presence of Eliza Westbrook, Mary now endured from that of her own sister-by-affinity. This state of mutual friction and irritation had reached a culminating point by the summer of 1820. On the 8th June Mary records in her journal : "A better day than most days, and good reason for it, though Shelley is not well. Claire away at Pugnano."

To make matters worse Claire was at this time in a constant state of anxiety and agitation about her child ; and anxiety and agitation do not improve an irritable temper.

In order to understand the circumstances of Allegra, we must glance briefly at the changes which had taken place in Byron's life since leaving him in Venice.

Since April, 1819, when he was first introduced to the Countess Teresa Guiccioli, the course of Byron's life had considerably altered. He then gave up the promiscuously dissolute life he had been leading, and devoted his attentions to the pretty young Ravennese *contessa*. Claire states, in one of her later diaries—no doubt not without prejudice but with some considerable probability of truth—that, while Teresa Guiccioli was sincerely devoted to Byron, he on his side was incapable of sincere attachment to any woman, but was alarmed at the state of his health at the time, and relied on la Guiccioli to keep him from his previous excesses; also that he liked the young Count Pietro Gamba, Teresa's brother, and was attracted by the prospect of such an agreeable family circle, men being attached to domesticity no less than women are. This Claire professed to be the opinion of the Countess Benzoni, at whose *salon* Byron and la Guiccioli met.¹

The Countess Teresa Guiccioli, *née* Gamba, was seventeen at the time of her first acquaintance with Byron. She had then quite recently married Count Guiccioli, a rich nobleman more than forty years her senior. Her infatuation for the handsome, famous, and fascinating Lord Byron—partly genuine passion and partly no doubt the product of vanity—was immediate and unhesitating. Before she left Venice with her husband a fortnight after their first meeting they were lovers. Byron subsequently

¹ Claire's diary, in the possession of Mr. Buxton Forman.

followed his mistress to Ravenna. In September, after a brief period of separation, during which the lonely Byron summoned Allegra to his side, Teresa Guiccioli and he were again together in Bologna. With her husband's consent they returned to Venice together, and settled (for the sake of her health, which was of a singularly accommodating order) at La Mira, while Count Guiccioli remained at Ravenna. At La Mira Allegra was with them.

Count Guiccioli somewhat tardily woke up to a sense of the impropriety of allowing his wife to live openly with her lover, and in November required her to give him up and return with him to Ravenna. This she reluctantly did, but a few weeks later Byron was summoned to her side by her father, as her health was despaired of in his absence. Byron was received with open arms, and wrote with amusement of the manner he was paraded round by la Guiccioli. He now settled definitely in Ravenna, bringing Allegra with him, and renting an apartment from the old Count in the Palazzo Guiccioli. Then again, after a few months' toleration, Count Guiccioli rebelled against the situation, which did not certainly enhance his dignity, and demanded that all intercourse between the lovers should cease. This Teresa refused to accede to, and public opinion, especially among the ladies of Ravenna, was in her favour. The dispute ended—not a little to Byron's dismay and disapproval, and contrary to the wishes of the young lady's family—in the Countess insisting upon a separation from her husband, and she obtained a papal decree to this effect in July, 1820. She thus relinquished her position and fortune, and contented herself with an allowance of £200 a year, which was

not augmented by her lover—any settlement which he offered being very properly refused by the Gambas, with whose conduct throughout the whole business Byron was well satisfied. One condition of the decree of separation was, that in dividing herself from her husband, the Countess must live under her father's roof. She therefore retired to a villa belonging to Count Gamba, fifteen miles distant from Ravenna, where Byron could only visit her occasionally. Shortly afterwards, however, she returned with her father and brother to Ravenna and settled in Count Gamba's house in the close vicinity of the Palazzo Guiccioli, where Byron was still somewhat incongruously settled. Here he was able to visit her at his pleasure and spent his evenings in her society.

Byron's attitude throughout all this was, in truth, one of amused and semi-despairing resignation rather than one of active approval or participation. He could be hard and ill-natured with any one who tried to bully or intimidate him, as is seen by his treatment of Claire, but was weak through natural goodness of heart when dealing with the importunities of love or affection. In his journal for January and February, 1821, he refers to the matter in somewhat flippant and irritated terms. After mentioning the loss of a lawsuit over his Rochdale property in Lancashire, he adds :

"In the same year, 1820, the Countess T. G. *nata* G. G., in despite of all I said and did to prevent it, *would* separate from her husband, Il Cavalier Commendatore G¹., etc., etc., etc., and all on the account of 'P. P. clerk of this parish.'¹ The

¹ A humorous allusion to Pope's "Memoirs of P. P. Clerk of this Parish."

other little petty vexations of the year—overturns in carriages—the murder of people before one's door, and dying in one's beds—the cramp in swimming—colics—indigestions and bilious attacks, etc., etc., etc."—scarcely a flattering *olla podrida* for the enamoured lady!

Since parting with little Allegra—then only twenty-one months old—in October, 1818, Claire had received but scanty news of her little one. She may or may not have seen Mrs. Hoppner's letter to Mary, written in January, 1819, which gave a very poor account of the child's condition, and referred to the *débauche affreuse* in which Byron lived. Allegra was like *une petite vieille*, and her future prospects looked black indeed, she wrote. In May, Claire learned that a proposal for adoption by an English lady had fallen through, Byron having refused to renounce all parental claim to the child, and in November of the same year, after a long period of silence, the Shelleys received a more favourable report from Venice.

On the 8th January, 1820, Claire entered in her journal: "A letter from Madame Hoppner. The Hero is gone to Ravenna." On learning this Claire, in great distress, appealed to Byron through the Hoppners to be allowed a visit from her child. The little creature's prospects must indeed have appeared black in her mother's eyes, knowing as she did nothing of Byron's mistress or of the child's treatment under her roof in Ravenna. Byron answered Hoppner on the 22nd April, refusing, for the sake of the child's health and welfare, as he avers, to send her to Claire and the Shelleys. "The child shall not quit me again to perish of Starvation, and

green fruit," he declares, "or be taught to believe that there is no Deity." He further affirmed in this letter that the child's health, since he had assumed charge of her, had been excellent, and her temper not bad, though vain and obstinate; and that in a year or two he would either send her to England or place her in a convent for education.

Mrs. Hoppner's letter recapitulating this was received on the 30th April, and on the 3rd May Claire notes in her diary, "A letter from Albè." To one or other of these letters—probably the "letter from Albè"—Claire replied by an earnest appeal, written direct to Lord Byron, entreating him not to part with the child in order to send her to a convent. She expressed the greatest horror of such a system of education.

Claire's natural impulse was to go straight to Ravenna and there see for herself what could be done, and come to some understanding with Byron; and Shelley was prepared to accompany her. This project was, however, dismissed, as it was agreed that no useful object could be attained by its fulfilment, while it might only serve to exasperate the suspicious Byron. To Claire's appeal Byron apparently replied with scant sympathy or kindness through Shelley, giving his reasons for refusing to send the child to Claire; and Shelley, on the 26th May, wrote to Byron, expressing regret at the harsh tone of his letter, but admitting the wisdom of the decision. Here, for the moment, the correspondence seems, somewhat ineffectually, to have rested.

Claire, whatever the defects of her character or the inconsistencies in her conduct may have been, seems to have been sincere in her love for her child;

and one cannot think of her without the deepest compassion, tormenting herself at a distance, and generally in so much ignorance regarding the welfare of her little one, with the thousand unreasoning and instinctive apprehensions which beset a mother's heart—apprehensions which, after all, the event was to prove less unreasonable than much reasoning.

CHAPTER XIII

THE "ODE TO THE SKYLARK"—LETTER TO MARIA GISBORNE AND OTHER WORK

THAT Shelley's home life, under all these circumstances, cannot have been all rose-coloured is abundantly evident ; but genius has the faculty of creating for itself a refuge and a stronghold in a world of its own, and Shelley—though capable of bringing his powerful intellect to bear on mundane matters when necessary—possessed, above all men, this happy gift of abstracting himself from them completely ; of soaring high above the world, with its mountains and its mole-hills, and even, as the skylark of which he sang, singing as he soared.

While staying in Casa Ricci, during the same brief weeks in which he so ably answered the foul insinuations of his detractors in the letter to Southey, Shelley wrote the "Ode to the Skylark"—the most exquisitely spiritual and melodious lyric in the language. "It was on a beautiful summer evening," Mary tells us, "while wandering along the lanes whose myrtle hedges were the bowers of the fireflies that we heard the carolling of the skylark which inspired one of the most beautiful of his poems."

Seated in Henry Reveley's workshop, in the midst of his motley jumble of engineering apparatus, Shelley during this brief sojourn in Leghorn also wrote the "Letter to Maria Gisborne"—one of the most charming and spontaneous, most simple and masterly things of its kind ever written. The "Letter" is full of the impressions around him—the sea and the sky, with their storms and calms, the moonlight nights when those "winged stars" the fire-flies flitted about, pale in its radiance, but each a miniature sun in the shade of the trees, and the distant *stornelli* of the peasants mingled with the nightingale's song—it is full of memories of the recent summer spent together with his correspondent amid these scenes, and of more distant memories of London and of his friends there.

The whole poem radiates with the charm, geniality, generosity, and good-tempered mirthfulness which were part of the man, and which Shelley preserved intact, however clouded and saddened at times by the many bitternesses of his life which could not embitter him. Through every line of the poem we feel and love the same Shelley that Trelawny and Hogg loved and portrayed to us.

On the 12th July, Shelley wrote to Peacock—now recently married—chaffing him about his silence, and expressing amazement at the vulgar fuss being made in England over Queen Caroline. He tells his correspondent of their sojourn in the Gisbornes' house, where the *Libeccio* howled like a chorus of fiends all day, the days were misty and not at all too hot, and the nights divinely serene. "I have been reading with much pleasure the Greek romances," he wrote. "I am translating in *ottava rima* the

'Hymn to Mercury' of Homer. Of course my stanza precludes a literal translation. My next effort will be that it should be legible—a quality much to be desired in translations." He mentions also in this letter that he is sending two additional poems to be added to those printed at the end of "Prometheus"—the "Ode to Liberty" and the "Ode to the Skylark." Shelley finished his splendidly spirited translation of Homer's Hymn on the 14th July. This work, which he later abused himself most unjustly, shows us the wonderful power Shelley possessed of recasting poetry in another language, without flatness or insipidity, but with all the sparkle, freshness, and vigour of the poem in the original tongue, essential qualities which are rarely compatible with slavish or over-rigid accuracy.

On the 26th June Shelley and Mary finished reading Virgil, and together they commenced Lucretius on the 28th; and in the evenings Shelley read aloud from the Greek romances and Forteguerra's "Ricciardetto"—which Dowden suggests may well be responsible for the lighter and more playful form of language in Shelley's own writings at this period—the "Witch of Atlas," which was still in the womb of time but near delivery, and the "Hymn to Mercury," which he was then translating, and which are both written in the Italian *ottava rima*.

Towards the latter end of July, Shelley went alone to seek for a suitable house at the Bagni di Pisa, as the heat in Leghorn threatened to become too severe for the baby. On the 23rd July he wrote to Mary, who was still in Leghorn, from the Masons' house in Pisa, announcing that he had secured a

commodious house, Casa Prinni, sufficiently capacious to allow of their writing at their ease in it, at a rental of about thirteen sequins a month. Here, at five in the morning of the 15th August, Shelley and his party arrived.

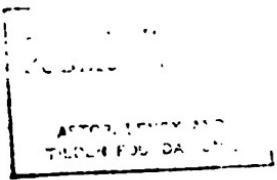
CHAPTER XIV

THE BAGNI DI PISA—CASA PRINNI—CLAIRE LEAVES THE
SHELLEYS—THE RISE AND FALL OF THE NEAPOLITAN CONSTI-
TUTION—SHELLEY'S ODE—AFFAIRS IN ENGLAND AND "SWELLFOOT
THE TYRANT"—THOMAS MEDWIN—RETURN TO PISA

THE Bagni di Pisa, or, as they are more frequently termed by Shelley and his biographers, the Bagni di San Giuliano, distant about four miles from Pisa, are situated at the base of the mountain of San Giuliano, facing some of the most desolate-looking mountains in Tuscany; a little townlet clustered round its piazza, the entire life of which is centred in its Baths and *stabilimento*, a species of casino with apartments to let for the accommodation of bathers, and a charming hilly garden at the back which dominates the little piazza. Shelley's house is a commodious two-storied building, with a garden in the rear, planted with oranges and lemons; which in his time used to extend to the end of the little block, where the stables then stood. The house itself is not lacking in comfort or a certain dignity, with its well-built arched entrance-hall and large rooms on either side of it. From the back of the house, across the little garden and the canal which runs at the foot of it, is a wide vista of fields, flat and somewhat melancholy, but not lacking in that beauty

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and sentiment which the industry of the Tuscan peasant imparts to all it touches. Here in the summer days all is bathed in the golden light which suffuses all things in the *Pisano*; but when autumn descends with its pall of storm-cloud and its merciless rain, the melancholy character of the scenery, which was pleasing and suggestive enough in the sunlight, becomes oppressive and gloomy to a degree. The Shelleys can scarcely have found it cool in the Bagni di Pisa, for in summer the heat here is a byword among the Pisans, and the only relief to the enervating effects of it is to be found in the delicious warm baths of the comfortable *stabilimento*.

The Bagni di Pisa, though less fashionable than the Bagni di Lucca, were nevertheless held in considerable repute in Shelley's day, as a summer health resort, or *villeggiatura*, and were much frequented by the members of the Tuscan Court and by the gentry of the surrounding towns, who flocked there during the heat of the summer months to enjoy the benefit of the nerve-soothing warm springs, which act as an antidote to the sluggish drowsiness produced by Pisa.

Mrs. Piozzi stayed here in the early autumn of 1786, and speaks in her journal with great enthusiasm of the surrounding scenery—"a place which beggars description, where the mountains are mountains of marble, and the bushes on them bushes of myrtle, large as our hawthorns and white with blossom . . ." and where the "imagination is fatigued with following the charms that surround one."

On the evening of the 11th August, we learn from Claire's diary, she, together with Mary and Shelley,

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went to Lucca—distant a few miles from the Bagni di Pisa—where they passed the night at the Inn of the Croce di Malta ; and on the following day, while the two women visited the Duomo and other points of interest in the city, Shelley went by himself on a pedestrian expedition up the Monte San Pellegrino, at the summit of which is a chapel, the resort of pilgrims on certain days in the year. This 12th August was a particularly hot day, and the poet over-fatigued himself physically with the climb ; but despite heat and fatigue the expedition is gratefully remembered by all lovers of poetry as having inspired, in the divine solitude of Nature, one of Shelley's most purely imaginative and delightful poems, the "Witch of Atlas"—which, as we know, disappointed Mary by its lack of sympathy-evoking human interest. On Sunday, the 13th August, Shelley descended from the mountain-top, where such wondrous visions had been accorded him, to the Baths ; and in the three days immediately following his return he recorded in verse his inspired imaginings.

Life at Casa Prinni, in the midst of impressive scenery and in gloriously serene Italian summer weather, passed quietly and pleasantly. For Mary—who was busily engaged with her novel "Valperga"—the situation was relieved by frequent absences of Claire, who, from her diary, appears to have been constantly away on visits to Leghorn and Pisa, in the latter city evidently staying with the Masons, who were always considerate and cordial friends to her. It must have been on the occasion of one of these visits, while discussing Claire's circumstances and uncomfortable situation in the Shelley household, that Mrs. Mason very sensibly advised her to do what

prudence and dignity had long counselled as the proper course, to try shifting for herself : advice which ended in her accepting the situation of governess in the family of Professor Bojti in Florence. It is evident that such a step had long been expedient and advisable, and finally, after bidding goodbye to Mary in Pisa (she having come there for the day on purpose), Claire, accompanied by the faithful Shelley, set out for Florence on the 20th October. In Claire's diary for that date occurs the following entry : "Start with Shelley at six in the morning. Sleep at the Fontana. Whoever does a benefit to another buys so much envy, malice, hatred, and all uncharitableness from him"—an observation best applicable to Shelley's experience, to which it possibly referred. On the evening of the following day Shelley, who was far from happy at the parting, took leave of Claire, after seeing her duly installed in Casa Bojti.

Having followed Claire forward a little prematurely, we must now trace our steps back to Shelley in the Baths of Pisa, where we left him after the completion of one of his most purely idealistic and un terrestrial poems. And we must return also from the mountain-tops, and the inspired visions of love and gentleness and peace, to the plain of human life and human struggles, which Shelley, for all his dreams, never allowed himself long to forget or ignore.

"The Ode to Naples," which followed with amazing and untiring instance on the "Witch of Atlas," was written between the dates of the 17th and 25th August. Mary Shelley tells us in her note to the earlier poem that his return from the expedition which

inspired it was followed by "considerable lassitude and weakness" due to over-exertion ; yet within three days after his return the "Witch of Atlas" was completed, and within ten or twelve days the "Ode to Naples" lay beside it.

As the "Ode to Naples" is the only poem written by Shelley which shows what interest he took—in the midst of much indifference and disgust which its then deplorable and degraded condition evoked in his breast—in the hopes and aspirations of Italy, it will be well to glance at the actual conditions and events which inspired the poem.

Ever since the restoration of King Ferdinand to his Neapolitan domains after the downfall of Napoleon and the defeat of Murat, Carbonarism, and the desire for freedom fostered by the Carbonari, had smouldered beneath the surface in the kingdom. When Shelley was in Naples in the winter of 1818-19, he had come little or not at all into contact with the Neapolitans, and had seen and observed nothing of the widespread movement of which not two years later he was to hymn the partial and ephemeral triumph. The apathy of centuries had been stirred by the revolutionary ideas of France at the end of the eighteenth century, and the unhappy kingdom, which since then had been tossed from one ruler to another, and suffered from the rapacity and mis-government of them all—finally to return to the maw of the weak, treacherous, and cowardly cruel Ferdinand—had not yet roused itself from its long slumber, but it was troubled and restless in its sleep. The compulsory proclamation of the Constitution in Spain in March, 1820, which inspired Shelley's "Ode to Liberty," gave fresh impetus to the aspirations

of the Carbonari. "All the kingdom seemed a Vesuvius" were the words of a Neapolitan patriot. On the 1st July two officers, Morelli and Silvati, commanding a troop of cavalry, and accompanied by the patriotic priest Menichini, raised the Italian standard at Monteforte. The troops sent by King Ferdinand to quell the insurgents proved less loyal to the King than to the Carbonari Constitutionalists, and had to be quietly led back to Naples. General Guglielmo Pepe, a high-minded and whole-hearted patriot, was enthusiastically acclaimed commander of the insurgent forces, which comprised practically the whole army. Under these circumstances, King Ferdinand, making a virtue of necessity, granted the Constitution which for the moment he had not the power to withhold. In Claire Clairmont's journal for the 16th July occurs the following entry : "Report of the Revolution at Naples. The people assembled round the palace demanding a constitution ; the King ordered his troops to fire and disperse the crowd ; they refused and he has now promised a constitution. The head of them is the Duke of Campo Chiaro. This is glorious, and is produced by the Revolution in Spain."

On the 13th July, with all proper *mise en scène* for the occasion, King Ferdinand swore his notorious oath, calling upon the Almighty to cause His thunder to descend there and then upon his head if he swore falsely. Needless to say, however, neither the thunder of Jehovah's vengeance, nor the thunderbolt of Jove, smote the perjurer, who returned in his usual health—though perhaps a trifle bilious from consumed and well-concealed rage—to his palace.

Thus for the moment Naples, and with her the

lovers of liberty throughout the peninsula, pathetically grasped and cherished this elusive will-o'-the-wisp—liberty and a Constitution granted by a worn-out and frightened Bourbon despot. Gabriele Rossetti, the Neapolitan poet of the movement, who not many months later sought to reanimate the hopes and courage of the failing constitutionalist forces in the gorges of Antrodoco, now sang his well-known patriotic poem commencing

“Sei pur bella con gli astri sul crine”;

and according to his account of the period, such were the beneficial results of liberty in the long-enslaved realm that “rivalry in virtue lessened crime” and many law-courts had to be closed for want of business. Ferdinand had become the idol of his subjects, who vied with one another in rendering him homage and praise.

All did not run smoothly from the start, however. Sicily did not greet the Spanish Constitution with any enthusiasm : it demanded instead the re-establishment of the English Constitution of 1812, which had been violated and disregarded by King Ferdinand. Shelley heard of the Sicilian revolt against the Neapolitan Constitution while engaged in his search for the house at the Baths. In his letter to Mary of the 23rd July he wrote : “There is bad news from Palermo. The soldiers resisted the people, and a terrible slaughter, amounting, it is said, to four thousand men, ensued. The event, however, was as it should be. Sicily, like Naples, is free.”

A month after the proclamation of the Neapolitan Constitution, when the hopes animated by it still ran

high, and before any treachery was suspected, Shelley wrote his "Ode." Standing once again, as in the winter of 1818, within the "city disinterred" which had so powerfully impressed his imagination, the poet figures in the spirit-like footfall of the autumn leaves along the streets of Pompeii, and in the slumberous voice of Vesuvius, the murmur of "prophesayings which grew articulate" for the future of Italy. There is nothing very clear or definite in the nature of these prophecies, beyond the deep and ardent faith in Liberty which was so innate in Shelley's nature, and which, for the first time, recent events allowed him to associate with the names of Naples and Italy—a more sanguine and definite faith in liberty in the abstract than in Italy in the concrete is revealed.

The hopes and the utility of the Neapolitan Constitution were destined to a brief life, however. The trouble in Sicily—which never ran very smoothly in harness with the northern Neapolitan State—though settled for the time by force of arms, was not the only difficulty. Among the Neapolitan Carbonari themselves dissensions were rife: an intelligent minority being in favour of casting off altogether the Bourbon yoke, while the majority were opposed to such extreme measures. But the rulers of Europe who had so long regarded Italy as a convenient dumping-ground for superfluous monarchs—a happy Tom Tiddler's ground for satisfying the lusts, greeds, and ambitions of one and another, and thus maintaining equilibrium without—took fright; and they assembled in Troppau to discuss what should be done.

On the 2nd September, Claire again notes in her diary: "Report from Naples that the Carbonari have possessed themselves of the persons of the

Royal family"—and Shelley, who was absent for the moment at Leghorn, wrote to Mary : "At Naples the Constitutional party have declared to the Austrian minister, that if the Emperor should make war upon them, their first action would be to put to death *all* the members of the Royal family—a necessary and most just measure, when the forces of the combatants, as well as the merits of their respective causes, are so unequal. That kings should be everywhere the hostages for liberty were admirable." But less wise counsels prevailed. The Pope, the Duke of Tuscany, the King of Sardinia, and with them the constitutional King Ferdinand, were invited to a Congress in Leybach—and the Parliament, instead of carrying out the safer plan of holding their monarch and his family as a hostage for their liberty, to be sacrificed if expedient, let him go. "So the interests of millions are in the hands of about twenty coxcombs, at a place called Leybach," Byron wrote in his journal for 11 January, 1821 ; and two days later : ". . . News comes—the *Powers* mean to war with the peoples. The intelligence seems positive—let it be so—they will be beaten in the end. The king-times are fast vanishing. There will be blood shed like water, and tears like mist, but the peoples will conquer in the end. I shall not live to see it, but I foresee it."

Byron was not deceived in his prophecies, either in the optimism of the finale, or the tragedy of events then impending. On the 9th February the Duke of Calabria, who was acting as Regent during his father's absence in Leybach, received a letter from the King (who was returning to his people with a force of fifty thousand Austrians, and a potential

Russian Army in the rear) in which he merely counselled that the people should submit quietly to the inevitable. Worthy son of his father, the Regent carried on a double game till the arrival of the Austrians, feigning to second the preparations for resistance decreed by Parliament. Baron Poerio, in a dignified and telling speech, urged the Parliament to oppose force with force, and to yield, if needs be, to superior force alone. On the 7th March, in the gorges of Antrodoco, in the Abruzzese mountains near Rieti, the patriot forces led by General Guglielmo Pepe were routed after six hours' fighting, by a vastly superior Austrian force, and the Kingdom of Naples fell back into slavery. The building where the short-lived Parliament had held its sittings was converted into a College of Music, and "Italians returned to making operas" as the Countess Guiccioli tearfully observed after the failure of the Carbonari insurrections in Romagna, for which the defeat of the Neapolitan Constitution was also accountable. Blood was shed like water, as Byron had predicted, and tears like mist, no doubt : eight hundred of the patriots are said to have been executed in one year : Morelli and Silvati were hanged, and those who wished to escape death, or imprisonment and torture, could only do so at the bitter price of exile. Thus ended, for the time, the bright hopes cherished by Italians in 1820—the hopes by which Shelley's noble "Ode" was inspired.

While politics in Italy—though pregnant with failure and disappointment to come—tended somewhat illusively towards the sublime, in England they had definitely descended the fatal step to the ridiculous. The delightfully illogical, respectable,

and correct English public, whose morals were so susceptible to shock and perturbation, was just then busily engaged in shouting itself hoarse and generally dancing off its equilibrium in enthusiasm for that scarcely respectable mediocrity, Caroline of Brunswick. The commonplace vulgarity of the good woman acted as an antidote to her immorality, which would otherwise have been inexcusable. "How can the English endure the mountains of cant which are cast upon them about this vulgar cook-maid they call a Queen?" exclaimed the exasperated Shelley in a letter of the 30th June. ". . . It is really time for the English to wean themselves from this nonsense, for really their situation is too momentous to justify them in attending to Punch and his wife."

The 24th August was a *festa* at San Giuliano, and on that day Mrs. Mason came on a visit to the Shelleys. The poet sat reading his "Ode to Liberty" to the ladies, accompanied from the street below by the vociferous gruntings of a number of pigs on their way to the fair, which he compared to the Chorus of Frogs in the satyric drama of Aristophanes; "and it being an hour of merriment, and one ludicrous association suggesting another, he imagined a political-satirical drama on the circumstances of the day, to which the pigs would serve as chorus—and 'Swellfoot' was begun." So Mary tells us in her note to "*Œdipus Tyrannus*—or Swellfoot the Tyrant," a comedy ridiculing the vagaries of "Punch and his wife," in which a company of swine form a not inappropriate chorus. The drama, in pamphlet form, was published by Ollier, through the agency of Shelley's good friend Horace Smith, before the

end of 1820 ; but when only seven copies had been sold the bookseller was induced to suppress the publication in order to avert the threatened prosecution of the Society for the Suppression of Vice !

On the 17th January, Shelley had written from Florence to his old schoolfellow and cousin, Thomas Medwin, then in Geneva, urging on him the charms of Italy, where it would appear that Medwin had suggested coming on account of his health. " When you come hither, you must take up your abode with me," Shelley wrote, " and I will give you all the experience which I have bought, at the usual market price, during the last year and a half's residence in Italy. . . . If you will be glad to see an old friend who will be very glad to see you—if this is any inducement—come to Italy."

Thomas Medwin, with all his faults—his vanity, his dilettanteism, his inaccuracies, and that tendency to become a *seccatura*, or in plain English a bore, which later on afflicted his cousin and friends—is yet dear to all lovers of Shelley for the whole-hearted admiration and affection which he bore him from his earliest childhood till Shelley's death and long after it. In the closing days of his own life Medwin's Shelley-worship had not flagged. Till very near the end he was busily engaged in revising and annotating that " Life of Shelley " which, notwithstanding some defects and many inaccuracies, is yet one of the most valuable Shelley documents we possess. " It has been written," Medwin says in his Preface, " with no indecorous haste—by one sensible of the difficulties of the task—of his inadequacy to do it justice—of his unworthiness to touch the hem of Shelley's garment, but not by one unable to appreciate the

greatness of his genius, or to estimate the qualities of his heart."

Medwin, who was Shelley's senior by one year, had been his schoolfellow at Sion House Academy in Brentford, the first school to which Shelley was sent in early boyhood, and continued to see something of him from time to time until he left for the East, as lieutenant of Dragoons, in about 1813. They corresponded regularly, Medwin tells us, though most of Shelley's letters to his cousin were lost or destroyed. On the eve of his departure from Bombay, Medwin came across, at a Parsee bookstall in the Bazaar, a copy of Shelley's "Revolt of Islam," which had been shipped there with other unsaleable literature, and which he picked up for little more than its waste-paper value. This reawakened his slumbering enthusiasm for Shelley, and revealed to him what his matured genius had attained. On landing in Liverpool in the spring of 1819 he learnt of his departure to Italy, and immediately wrote to him. When Edward John Trelawny first met Medwin in the summer of 1820 at Geneva, in the company of Lieutenant Edward Williams and George Jervoise of the Madras Artillery, Medwin "talked of nothing but the inspired boy, his virtues and his sufferings, so that, irrespective of his genius, we all longed to know him."

In the autumn of 1820 Medwin accepted Shelley's invitation to Italy, and arrived in Pisa on the 21st October. Here the poet, on his return from accompanying Claire to Florence, met him at the famous "Albergo delle Tre Donzelle" on the following day.

"It was nearly seven years since we parted," Medwin writes, "but I should immediately have recog-

nized him in a crowd. His figure was emaciated, and somewhat bent, owing to near-sightedness, and his being forced to lean over his books, with his eyes almost touching them ; his hair, still profuse, and curling naturally, was partially interspersed with grey ; but his appearance was youthful, and his countenance, whether grave or animated, strikingly intellectual. There was also a freshness and purity in his complexion that he never lost." Elsewhere Medwin says that Shelley put him in mind of the portrait of Raphael in the Louvre "whom I have often thought Shelley resembled in expression."

The same day of their meeting, Sunday, the 22nd October, Shelley and his cousin proceeded to the Baths, where the latter made the acquaintance of Mary and the infant Percy.

The season at the Baths of San Giuliano ended in September, and by now the weather had completely broken, and almost incessant rain was the order of the day and night—"as bad weather as is possible in Italy" Mary says of it. Mrs. Piozzi has left on record her impressions of the autumnal furies of the elements in these parts, when "such a torrent came tumbling down the sides of San Giuliano as I am persuaded no female courage could have calmly looked on."

Mary Shelley appears to have taken it calmly enough, however, and to have waited philosophically for St. Martin's summer. But by the 25th of the month, after another night of incessant rain, the banks of the Serchio broke, and by dark all the Baths had overflowed.

"The chill rain is falling, the nipped worm is crawling,
The river is swelling, the thunder is knelling
For the Year,"

Shelley wrote in the beautiful autumnal "Dirge" which must have been composed under these impressions.

The garden behind Casa Prinni backed on to the canal which connects the Serchio with the Arno, and this canal having also overflowed its banks, the water rose four feet deep in the house, and it became evident that the hour had now arrived when departure elsewhere was imperative. But despite the inconveniences and drawbacks of the situation, the Shelleys were not blind to its picturesque aspect, which Mary describes in her notes to the poems of 1820. "Well do I remember the scene which I stood with Shelley at the window to admire," Medwin writes. "The Contadini bore torches, and the groups of cattle, and the shouts of the drivers, the picturesque dresses of their wives, half immersed in the water, and carrying their children, and the dark mountains in the background, standing out in bold relief, formed a singular spectacle, well worthy of a painter's study."

Next morning, according to the same account, the flood having gone on increasing, the whole of the first floor of Casa Prinni was under water, and Shelley and his family and household escaped in a boat from the upper windows, and drove to Pisa. Dowden gives the 29th October as the date of their departure.

CHAPTER XV

SHELLEY'S RESIDENCES IN PISA—EMILIA VIVIANI AND THE
“EPIPSYCHIDION”—“THE DEFENCE OF POETRY”

ON returning to Pisa in the autumn of 1820, Shelley did not again occupy Casa Frassi, his earlier residence here, but took up his abode in Casa Galletti, a “sufficiently commodious” lodging, also on the Lung’ Arno. This is the house often referred to as next door to the well-known marble palazzo with the enigmatic inscription “*Alla giornata*” graven in lead on its marble façade, which caused some bewilderment to Shelley, and not less to his biographers. To this day the Pisans themselves cannot correctly account for the inscription. Medwin’s suggestion that it merely indicates “erected by day-work” is altogether inadmissible. Shelley, he tells us, favoured the theory that there was some deep and mystical meaning in the words, and deemed it was a tribute to the East, where the proprietor had passed his best days and amassed his colossal fortune. Popular tradition has it that an ancient proprietor of the palace was taken prisoner by a band of pirates, who in those days infested the Mediterranean; that having been carried away into slavery, he was promised freedom by his master “when Easter day should fall on a Friday.”

and that this having actually so befallen, the liberated man returned to his native city, and erected the façade in memory of the day—" *alla giornata*"—of his liberation. So much for tradition, and the Easter Friday !

Casa Galletti stands, when facing it, to the right of the marble palace of the mysterious name—a three-storied house (or four-storied, as Shelley described it, by counting the basement, contrary to Italian usage) of which the Shelleys occupied the *mezzanino* and two rooms on the fourth floor, all facing south, and with "two fireplaces"—an important consideration to the warmth-loving poet. The Shelleys remained in Casa Galletti till the 5th March, 1821, when they removed to the handsome Palazzo Aulla, close at hand.

Shelley himself was not in good health or spirits at this time. In writing to Claire, he speaks of having suffered in the latter week of October "a violent access of my disease, with a return of those spasms which I used to have." Vaccà at this time seems to have diagnosed Shelley's trouble as nephritic—a fact to which Shelley refers more than once in his correspondence, adding that Vaccà "consoled" him with the further information that the disease had no tendency to shorten life. He complains more of the "nervous irritability" which these attacks left him than of the actual pain he suffered : a state which, "if not incessantly combated by myself and soothed by others, would leave me nothing but torment in life."

Medwin's "cheerful conversation" and the wonderful and interesting things he related of the interior of India were at such times a pleasant dis-

traction, though poor Medwin himself was later on relegated by Shelley and Mary to the noxious and uninspiring ranks of bores. His poetry—mostly on Indian subjects, lion hunts and so on—which Shelley had good-naturedly, but very rashly, encouraged in an undue degree in his letters, may have been gradually responsible for his comparative downfall in their regard. A six weeks' illness which he later on suffered in the Shelleys' house (commencing presumably towards the end of November) may also have contributed, for it must be confessed that the "interesting invalid" is sometimes a trifle prosaic at close quarters. Medwin, however, gives the warmest praise to Shelley's brotherly and untiring devotion to him—applying leeches, administering medicines, etc.—during this illness.

Claire, meanwhile, in her capacity as governess to the children of Professor Bojti, in Florence, did not find life all rose-coloured. "But for Mrs. Mason," Shelley wrote to her not many days after she had left them, "I should say, come back immediately and give up a plan so inconsistent with your feelings. . . . You know, however, whatever you shall determine on, where to find one ever affectionate friend, to whom your absence is too painful for your return ever to be unwelcome." Fortunately the wise influence of Mrs. Mason and possibly Mary's insistence prevented any rash impulse being followed. On the 21st November Claire was back in Pisa on a visit of some weeks.

In Claire's and Mary's journals at this period many new names are to be found, of which one at least is inalienably associated with Shelley's life and poetry. On the 26th November Claire notes :

" Professor Pacchiani and Zoppo spend the evening," and two days later " Pacchiani calls his priest's cap a Tartuffometro. Mr. Taafe calls." On the 29th she records a visit with Pacchiani to the Convent of St. Anna to see the beautiful Teresa [Emilia] Viviani. From this date forward during her stay in Pisa, Claire records almost daily visits to the convent captive. On the 5th December she writes : " Call upon the Viviani. Mary and S. and Mr. Medwin call to see her."

Of the Contessina Teresa Emilia Viviani, whose beauty so deeply impressed and inspired Shelley, and to which—more precious than many admirable talents—we owe the glorious "Epipsychedion," not much is known. The unmerciful and unenamoured judgment of Mary has reduced her, in all respects but one, to a sufficiently ordinary, commonplace mortal. But not even Mary denied her her beauty ; nor can time, which has reduced it to dust and corruption long since, obliterate its memory, which must last as long as the poem inspired by it, may be as long as our language shall endure.

No pictorial portrait of Emilia is known, and for anything like a detailed description of the semblance of Shelley's " Youth's vision thus made perfect," we must turn to the pages of the much abused, but not less quoted and valuable, Medwin. " Emilia was indeed lovely and interesting," he writes. " Her profuse black hair, tied in the most simple knot, after the manner of a Greek Muse in the Florence gallery, displayed to its full height her brow, fair as that of the marble of which I speak. She was also of about the same height as the antique. Her features possessed a rare faultlessness, and almost Grecian

contour, the nose and forehead making a straight line—a style of face so rare that I remember Bartolini's telling Byron that he had scarcely an instance of such in the numerous casts of busts which his studio contained. Her eyes had the sleepy voluptuousness, if not the colour, of Beatrice Cenci's. They had indeed no definite colour, changing with the changing feelings to dark or light, as the soul animated them. Her cheek was pale, too, as marble, owing to her confinement and want of air, or perhaps to 'thought.' Mary Shelley also portrays Emilia in the Clorinda of her novel "Lodore," and her description, though somewhat modified, agrees in the main with Medwin's. Mary writes of Clorinda : "She was adorned by talents, by genius ; she was eloquent and beautiful, and full of enthusiasm and feeling." But her beauty and talents were marred by unreasoning jealousy and violence of temper and passions. Horace Saville—a kind of feebly-drawn Shelley—marries her out of pity, apprehensive of her future fate "among her unworthy countrymen." (The Clorinda of "Lodore" is a Neapolitan.) Mary's own experience with Emilia is certainly glanced at in the description of Clorinda's attitude towards Lodore's daughter. "There was something in her manner that always said, 'You are English, I am Italian ; and there is natural war between my fire and your snow ! '

Besides being beautiful, Emilia must have possessed considerable charm of manner, and have been amiable, accomplished, and intelligent ; though Shelley no doubt held somewhat exaggerated views of her talents, partly attributable to the fascination of her person, and also in part to his imperfect

knowledge of her tongue. The flowery and poetic language of her letters is largely borrowed from the Italian prayer-books which she must have had ample leisure to peruse in her convent.

What little has transpired of Emilia's story is well known through Shelley's biographers ; and little else probably remains to be known. She was the daughter of an undistinguished nobleman of small fortune, Count Viviani, probably a member of the same family as the Marchese Niccolò Viviani, then Governor of Pisa, a Florentine nobleman of some literary pretensions. About two years before the Shelleys became acquainted with Emilia, she had been relegated as *pensionnaire* to a convent in order to appease the jealous suspicions of a young and less attractive stepmother, whom the Count, her father, had recently espoused. A younger sister shared a similar fate in another convent. Shut off, within the walls of St. Anna's *Conservatorio*, from life, love, and all the emotions proper to her age and nature, poor Emilia pined in solitude, awaiting a loveless marriage as the only release from her captivity.

The Convent or *Conservatorio* of St. Anna, situated in the Via St. Anna, in the north of the city, in direct line with the Ponte di Mezzo, which Medwin has described as such a gloomy and ruinous edifice, is in point of fact a sufficiently commodious and handsome building of the *settecento*, though its origin is of much earlier date. Originally a convent in the strict sense of the term, it was spared by Pietro Leopoldo when he suppressed the convents in Tuscany, and converted into a young ladies' college or *Conservatorio*, and as such it still endures. At the rear of the building there is a large and

particularly charming old-fashioned garden, quiet and solitary, where the nuns were wont to take their limited exercise, and reflect on the vanity of human things. No doubt this garden, with its silence and old-world peace, overgrown with the odorous flowers so intimately associated with Italian convent gardens—thyme, basil, verbena, mignonette, and *erba di Santa Maria*—and surrounded on all sides with high walls, much as it may charm and fascinate the casual visitor, gave little scope to poor Emilia's romantic and impatient youth; and it must have been through her vision of it that Mary Shelley describes it as affording the possibility of "a dozen steps to the right, and then back to the left another dozen" and no more. The garden itself backs on to the Piazza of Santa Caterina, silent and deserted in the midst of its plane-trees.

It was doubtless from the little-prized convent garden that Emilia was wont to gather the bouquets of flowers, the "sweet basil and mignonette" which she sent to her "beloved brother" Shelley, which called forth from him the charming madrigal quoted by Medwin as addressed to her.

The 5th December, the date recorded in Claire's journal when she, Mary, Shelley, and Medwin called on the beautiful Emilia at St. Anna, may be taken as the first meeting of the poet and his Muse.

From the moment of their meeting Shelley must have been deeply impressed and charmed by the beauty and sweetness of Emilia—the visible semblance in human form of all that was most beautiful, and therefore to him most exalted, in his ideal of woman. After this first meeting, for some two months or so, Shelley saw her almost daily,

calling on her at her convent with Mary or Claire, and occasionally seeing her outside its precincts. On the 2nd February, Mary records in her diary that "Emilia Viviani walks out with Shelley in the evening."

What Shelley felt for Emilia, and what he chose to weave into his impression of her, is sufficiently well-mirrored in the "Epipsychedion," and further research or analysis would be vain. Shelley was as generous and lavish with his heart as he was with his purse, only that his purse was limited and his heart was not. It was as fertile and as perennially bountiful as the spring which reanimates all creation. With Shelley's intense devotion to beauty, his inexhaustible capacity for love, his power of bestowing and need for receiving sympathy, it was impossible for any single woman to fill his heart for very long. He was in love with all women, as Trelawny said; yet we feel the sincerity of his assertion in writing to Claire that there was no need for her to fear the admixture of what she called *love* in his sentiments for Emilia. We may deduce from this, if we wish, not that Shelley was not in love with Emilia, but that love has many interpretations.

But while not insensible to anything that was beautiful in the person or character of women, it appears to me quite a mistake to speak of Shelley as easily influenced by them. He rarely saw or thought of a woman in her concrete and limited being. He endowed them with ideal qualities existing mostly in his own fervent imagination, thus often influencing *them* no doubt, and as it were re-creating them. What he did not find to his taste in creation, he re-fashioned in his own mind. Women were truly

to him such stuff as dreams are made of. When he woke up from his dream, the woman existed no more for him. Is this not true of Harriet, of Elizabeth Hitchener, of Emilia Viviani, even, to some extent, of Mary herself? In what manner did Shelley ever reflect the influence of these, except indeed what he may have gained in experience and wisdom in his relations with Mary? He was not in general influenced by the women, but by his own ideals which they served to animate.

Shelley's enthusiasm for the real Emilia was not of very long duration. Taking Claire's date of the 5th December as that of their first meeting, he cannot have known her two months before the completion of "Epipsychedion." On the 16th February, in sending the poem to Ollier for anonymous publication, he speaks of it as "a production of a portion of me already dead." And writing on the subject many months later, towards the close of his life, he says : "The 'Epipsychedion' I cannot look at ; the person whom it celebrates was a cloud instead of a Juno ; and poor Ixion starts from the centaur that was the offspring of his own embrace. If you are curious, however, to hear what I am and have been, it will tell you something thereof. It is an idealised history of my life and feelings. I think one is always in love with something or other ; the error—and I confess it is not easy for spirits cased in flesh and blood to avoid it—consists in seeking in a mortal image the likeness of what is, perhaps, eternal." Yet let us be grateful to the beauty and grace of Emilia Viviani, for, however the mortal image may deceive and disappoint, it was none the less the mortal image of

this beautiful young girl that stirred the emotions and imagination of the poet, and conjured up his visions of the universal and the enduring.

The "Epipsychedion" is a kind of spiritual autobiography in which the poet recounts his successive endeavours after the attainment of ideal love ; and how after vainly pursuing it as a phantom (as in Alastor) he sought it again and again in the mortal image of woman, till after many failures, errors, and partial attainments, he encountered the most perfect image of what he sought in Emilia. In a gorgeous crescendo the verses rise to a height of winged human passion that burns with the purity of unquenchable fire. Having found love at last in the semblance of a woman, we again lose sight of the woman in the all-consuming universality of the passion of love.

Not less than a poem of ideal—or as some have called it "Platonic"—love "Epipsychedion" may also be regarded as the supreme poem of unfettered and uncircumscribed love : love which cannot be bound or narrowed down to the grasp of any one individual—being many-faceted and reflecting many truths, desiring and embracing all that is desirable and beautiful.

"True love in this differs from gold and clay,
That to divide is not to take away.
Love is like understanding, that grows bright
Gazing on many truths. . . ."

And again :

" . . . Narrow
The heart that loves, the brain that contemplates
One object, and one form, and builds thereby
A sepulchre for its eternity."

It would serve no particular purpose, even if we had the material to do so—to follow Emilia into the outer darkness. Mary never could bring herself to—or at any rate never did—annotate the “Epipsy-chidion,” as she did all Shelley’s other important poems. To the humanly jealous wife, who coveted all her husband’s thoughts and love for herself, the memory of this episode must have been painful. Not long after it was over, however, she could dismiss the subject of Emilia Viviani with a nursery rhyme at her expense, and a laugh at “Shelley’s Italian Platonics.” She even plainly hints that Emilia was mercenary, and degenerated into one of Shelley’s vampires. And in the same letter in which she tells of these things she adds of Emilia that, having married one Biondi, she led her husband and mother-in-law a “devil of a life.” Thus in vicious and ungarnished prose Mary revenges herself for what she had suffered from this poetry.

Medwin tells of having seen Emilia, not many years after her marriage to Sig. Biondi, a gentleman of Maremma, sadly altered and dying of consumption.¹ Emilia is said to have died at the age of thirty-seven, though it has been stated on other authority that she survived some further years.

The eloquent “Defence of Poetry,” in which Shelley so finely analyses the moral and essential value of poetry, and reveals such a subtle and deep apprehension of its relation to human life, thought, and society, was written shortly after the “Epipsy-

¹ “So changed that recumbent figure,” he writes, “that I could scarcely recognize a trace of the once beautiful Emilia. Shelley’s evil augury had been fulfilled, she had found in her marriage all that he had predicted. . . .”

chidion," and these works—the products of some two succeeding months—taken together, give an idea of the vastness and harmony of Shelley's powers, which, though we value him almost exclusively for his imaginative or poetic qualities, were so finely balanced between reason and imagination. Few of our poets have been such accomplished or logical reasoners. It was the perusal of a somewhat casuistic paper by Peacock, entitled "The Four Ages of Poetry," which appeared in *Ollier's Literary Miscellany*, that roused Shelley to break a lance with his friend in honour of his mistress *Urania*.

As a personal confession of the processes of a poet's mind and faculties the "Defence" is infinitely valuable. "A man cannot say," Shelley writes, "'I will compose poetry.' The greatest poet even cannot say it; for the mind in creation is a fading coal, which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness; this power arises from within, like the colour of a flower which fades and changes as it is developed, and the conscious portions of our nature are unprophetic either of its approach or its departure. . . . When composition begins, inspiration is already on the decline."

There is a certain analogy of thought between Shelley's "Defence" and the "Apologia" of his distant and revered connection, Sir Philip Sidney.

CHAPTER XVI

PISAN FRIENDS—PACCHIANI, SGRICCI, ETC.

THE Professor Pacchiani, through whom the Shelleys became acquainted with the beautiful and unwilling recluse and with several others of their Pisan acquaintances, was himself a very curious and remarkable man, deserving of some notice in his turn. Medwin's account of the Professor appears, so far as I can ascertain, to be substantially correct. His reputation was universally high among his compatriots as a man of intellect and most uncommon talent : but he bore anything but a high personal character. Despite the fact (vouched for by Medwin) that he lost his professorship at the university by reason of an ill-timed but irresistible *bon mot*, he yet maintained a somewhat discredited standing in Pisan society by virtue of his stinging tongue and pen, the displeasure and caustic sarcasm of which few cared to encounter. The witticism which cost Pacchiani so dear was related to Medwin by himself ; but it should be added that the same anecdote is told of other Pisan notabilities. It runs thus. One night when carousing in the streets of Pisa in very dissolute company, he was challenged by the patrole, and promptly accounted for himself as follows : "Sono un uomo

pubblico, in una strada pubblica, con una donna pubblica." ["I am a public man, in a public street, with a public woman."]

Of his ecclesiastical career little is known ; but Medwin tells us that he was *amico di casa* and confessor to the Viviani family, and Claire refers to his priest's cap—his *Tartuffometro*, as he candidly and very appropriately termed it.

In character, Il Professore Pacchiani seems to have combined all the most characteristic qualities of an Italian "bad lot" with that charm and geniality which generally prove so fatally alluring to the unsuspecting northerner, accustomed to a less seductive form of rascality in his own country. Medwin tells of various shady practices by which he managed to eke out a living, and sums him up as "a *Mezzano, Cicerone, Conoscitore, Dilettante,* and I might add, *Ruffiano*."

Francesco Domenico Guerrazzi, the novelist, wrote of Pacchiani that he was a man of extraordinarily rapid understanding, so that knowledge came to him without labour or effort : a man of giant intellect, but "an idler and a sceptic." But if he lived like a cynic, he died like a Roman, Guerrazzi adds, "*mori come un Romano.*" When near his end, the Archbishop of Florence sent him monetary succour, which Pacchiani refused, saying : "Thank Monsignore for his humanity, and tell him that for the journey for which I am preparing the carriages cost nothing, and the innkeepers make no charge—all is paid for in advance."

Despite the obliquity of his character, the Professor added a fine presence to his rare wit and charm of manner. He was close on fifty when he

entered the Shelley circle ; tall, dark as a Moor, lean and angular, with black, gloomy eyes, and well-marked, regular features—a figure well worthy of Titian's brush, as Medwin declared. In Pisa he was known as "*il Diavolo Pacchiani*"—and a highly entertaining devil, if not an equally creditable one, he must have been.

How Shelley first met with Pacchiani I know not. In all likelihood it must have been by introduction from the Gisbornes, as he was a prominent light of the University at the time of Henry Reveley's studentship there. Be this as it may, it is certain that the poet received him very favourably at first, and that for a time he was a great favourite with him and with the ladies, paying almost daily visits to the Casa Galletti. On the 23rd December he escorted Claire back to Florence, entertaining her on the road with epigrams against his country-women, calling on her frequently after her arrival, riding with her in the Cascine, etc. "Henry will tell you how much I am in love with Pacchiani," Shelley wrote to Mr. Gisborne in November—a remark which strengthens my idea that Pacchiani must have become known to the Shelleys through the Gisbornes' or through Henry's introduction.

"Shelley, when first Pacchiani became a habitué at his house," Medwin tells us, "was charmed with him, and listened with rapt attention to his eloquence, which he compared to that of Coleridge." But despite his many charms, and his able, witty, and erudite conversation, *il Diavolo* did not long continue in favour in the household of the "Satanic" Shelley.

"I like Pacchiani less and less," Mary Shelley

wrote to Claire in January, 1821 ; "there is no truth in him—but a love of wealth and a boasting infinitely disgusting." In describing any one, his first words, according to Mary's account, were : "È ricco, ma questo è nulla—ma poi è ricchissimo !" ("He is rich—but that's of no account—but he really is very rich !") "Emilia will perhaps relate to you the coin in which he intends to make her pay for his friendship," Mary adds. "So through her he is to gain favours and dinners from the English." In another letter Mary states that Pacchiani disgusted Shelley by telling an obscene story.

Besides the lovely Emilia Viviani, Sgricci, the famous *improvvisatore*, and the Greek Prince Alexander Mavrocordato, were introduced to the Shelleys by Professor Pacchiani.

Tommaso Sgricci, a native of Arezzo, at this period disputed the field of improvisation in Italy with the Roman, Francesco Gianni, and the Abruzzese, Gabriele Rossetti. His wonderful power of spontaneous eloquence and inspired poetic rhetoric won him considerable fame throughout Tuscany and Northern Italy, Vincenzo Monti being among his most conspicuous admirers and patrons. Byron—who heard Sgricci improvise in Milan on the occasion referred to by his ex-physician Polidori when he produced "Eteocles and Polynices" held no very enthusiastic opinion of his powers ; and Polidori speaks of them with ridicule and contempt. Shelley and Mary, on the contrary, had the very highest admiration for Sgricci, as generously recorded by them both. Mr. Rossetti was once shown a paper written by Shelley expressing his admiration of Sgricci's powers. Medwin speaks of

Shelley having heard him improvise in Lucca on the subject of Iphigenia in Tauris. In Medwin's "Conversations of Lord Byron" he refers to a talk between Shelley and Byron on the subject, in which the former expressed his high esteem of Sgricci's genius. On the 21st December the Shelleys heard Sgricci improvise in the theatre in Pisa, and on January the 12th Mary heard him in Lucca.

On this occasion Shelley was prevented from accompanying Mary to Lucca by ill-health. "I mentioned that on Thursday, Sgricci was to give an Accademia which I had little hope of attending," Mary wrote.¹ "Tuesday and Wednesday came, and I had still less, for Shelley's boils got worse—his face swelled dreadfully, and though not very ill he was in no travelling condition. However, at his persuasion, I cooked up a party with Pacchiani, and Thursday evening at 6 o'clock I, Babe, Pacchiani, and Maria [presumably the nurse] set out for Lucca. It had rained the whole day and the day before besides—but it held up as we went and we had a pleasant ride. It was eight when we arrived and we hastened to the theatre."

On this night, however, Sgricci did not improvise, his *accademia* being postponed to the following evening. Pacchiani could not delay his return to Pisa, having already missed one lesson that week at the University. However, through a friend of the resourceful *diavolo*, Mary was introduced to a local "blue," the Marchesa Eleonora Bernardini, and in this lady's box, on the following evening, she witnessed with great delight and enthusiasm his

¹ Letter from Mary Shelley to Claire Clairmont in the possession of Mr. H. Buxton Forman.

improvisation on the subject of Ignez di Castro, a subject "ordered" by the Duchess of Lucca, who was present.

" . . . It seems impossible that a tragedy represented by one man should in any way create illusion," Mary writes; " others complained of the want of it—yet when Pietro unveiled the head of Ignez, when Sancho died in despair on her body, it seemed to me as if it were all there; so truly and passionately did his words depict the scene he wished to represent. The Signora B. said that it was *una cosa mediocre*—to me it appeared a miracle."

Again on the 23rd January, Mary and Shelley together heard Sgricci improvise in Pisa, this time the subject chosen being the "Death of Hector." Speaking of this occasion, Mary writes :

" Sgricci was in excellent *inspiration*; his poetry was brilliant, flowing, and divine. A hymn to Mars and another to Victory were wonderfully spirited and striking."

I find these hymns to Mars and Victory recur in the printed version of an improvisation of later date on the same subject which Sgricci delivered in Turin in 1823—a noticeably good work of its kind.

From Mary's diary for the 1st December, 1820, I gather that to have been the date when Pacchiani introduced Sgricci in person to the denizens of Casa Galletti; and for a time he was a very welcome visitor. The intimacy did not apparently last very long, Shelley later on expressing much disgust and indignation over Sgricci's manner of talking against the Neapolitan insurgents. He was at this date a young man of some twenty-seven years, of noticeably romantic and "inspired" appearance, with fine,

well-chiselled features and long dark locks which flowed wildly over his face and shoulders in moments of poetic *entraîn* and excitement. John Polidori describes his costume when appearing in public as somewhat *outré*—"yellow boots with trousers, blue coat, and a Flemish collar to his shirt."

According to Medwin—who is frequently lax as regards strict precision of dates and facts—Sgricci, soon after the period of his acquaintance with the Shelleys, obtained a pension from the Grand Duke "and his pension extinguished his genius." Medwin is evidently wrong in supposing that his last appearance on the boards of a theatre was on the occasion when Shelley heard him in Lucca, as he certainly appeared in Turin again as late as the 13th June, 1823. He died in Florence in 1836, aged 43 years.

Medwin speaks also of Rosini, a Professor at the Pisan University, a learned and cultured man, and author of the "*Monaca di Monza*," as being among Shelley's occasional guests at this period, and there is no reason to believe that he imagined or invented this, though, as Dowden points out, no reference to him occurs in Mary's journal, to bear out the statement.

The man whose influence at this time on Shelley and his circle has left the most enduring results, was another introduced by Pacchiani, Prince Alexander Mavrocordato: a Greek patriot destined to play a prominent part in the revolutionary politics of his country. Later in their intimacy Mavrocordato's company evidently grew a little distasteful to Shelley, though he struggled loyally against the feeling.

"Prince Mavrocordato," Mary writes in her Preface

■

to "Hellas"—the product of these influences—"was warmed by those aspirations for the independence of his country which filled the hearts of many of his countrymen. He often intimated the possibility of an insurrection in Greece; but we had no idea of its being so near at hand, when, on the 1st April, 1821, he called on Shelley, bringing the proclamation of his cousin, Prince Ypsilanti, and, radiant with exultation and delight, declared that henceforth Greece would be free."

Mavrocordato proved a useful friend to Mary, no less than an inspiring one to her husband. She was at the time laboriously, but enthusiastically, prosecuting her studies in the Greek language, and Mavrocordato was pressed into immediate service as her tutor, she in return helping him with English. "Do you not envy my luck," she wrote to Mrs. Gisborne, "that having begun Greek, an amiable, young, agreeable, and learned Greek Prince comes every morning to give me a lesson of an hour and a half? This is the result of an acquaintance with Pacchiani. So, you see, even the Devil has his use."

The friendship with Mavrocordato lasted during the whole of his stay in Pisa, whence he departed to take part in the Greek revolution on the 26th June, 1821. Mavrocordato himself was the centre of a little group of Greek exiles then resident in Pisa, among whom his uncle, Prince Caradja (ex-Hospodar of Wallachia), was also a prominent figure. His cousin, Princess Argiropoli, who with her husband was also in Pisa at this time, became known to the Shelleys through Prince Mavrocordato.

Count Taafe is another name frequently met with from this time forward in the diaries and corre-

spondence of the Shelley circle. John Taafe was an Irishman, and a Knight Commander of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem : the precise value of his title of Count seems problematic. He was regarded with considerable amusement by the English in Pisa, and became the butt for much good-natured but pungent Byronic chaff. He thirsted for the glories of authorship ; and indeed his Commentary on Dante's " Divine Comedy " was well worthy of publication. Shelley and Byron diligently beset their respective publishers to gratify the Irishman's desire. Byron, by making Murray's acquiescence to the demand a condition of peace after a period of hostility between himself and his publisher, won the day, and in 1822 the first (and prematurely last) volume of Taafe's Commentary, divorced from the translation which he had desired to see along with it, was issued from Albemarle Street.

It is evident from Taafe's Commentary that he can have been no all-round fool : Byron and Shelley both expressed a high opinion of it, and indeed it reveals the writer to have been a man of considerable culture, observation, and ingenuity. His verse, according to Byron, was such as it had " pleased God to endue him withal," but might be regarded as " very good Irish." Shelley and Medwin present it in a very grotesque aspect. Byron, with great good-nature, engaged to charge Gifford (the Editor of the *Quarterly*) not to abuse Taafe and begged Moore to do the like with Jeffrey (the Editor of the *Edinburgh Review*).¹ " He is such a good-natured, heavy . . . Christian,"

¹ Byron thought the most prudent plan would be to get these worthies to notice the comment without touching the translation. " But I doubt the dogs," he adds, " the text is too tempting."

Byron wrote in March, 1822, "that we must give him & shove through the press. He naturally thirsts to be an author, and has been the happiest of men for these two months, printing, correcting, collating, dating, anticipating, and adding to his treasures of learning. Besides, he has had another fall from his horse into a ditch the other day, while riding out with me into the country." "He will die if he is *not* published: he will be damned if he *is*; but that *he* don't mind," he says elsewhere.

Besides his Commentary on Dante, Taafe printed in 1852 a poem in two volumes, entitled "Adelais," and the "History of the Holy, Military, Sovereign Order of St. John of Jerusalem," in the same year.

CHAPTER XVII

BYRON AND THE CARBONARI—MYLORD AND THE AUSTRIAN POLICE—BYRON'S FAITH IN THE ITALIAN CAUSE—THE FAILURE OF THE CARBONARI UPRIISINGS IN 1820-21

THE prospect of an emancipated Greece—which Shelley and Mary grasped at so eagerly and which later on was destined to so completely revolutionise the course of Byron's career—came to illumine the political horizon when the immediate hopes for Italy seemed failing, and the powers of darkness and of Austria to be everywhere triumphant throughout the peninsula.

Many hopes and many projects had quickened at the triumph of liberal ideas in the Kingdom of Naples, and Shelley wrote of it in August, 1820 :

“ . . . the signal and the seal
(If hope and truth and justice can avail)
Art thou of all these hopes—O hail ! ”

But when the signal failed, and the Neapolitan Constitution perished in March, 1821, the hopes which it had awakened were doomed also to destruction for the time.

“ We are surrounded here in Pisa,” Shelley wrote on the 21st March, “ by revolutionary volcanoes,

which as yet give more light than heat ; the lava has not yet reached Tuscany."

In Tuscany, indeed, under the mild and common-sense régime of Leopold, things went on quietly enough ; but elsewhere the lava was bubbling beneath the surface, and the volcanoes menacing and roaring, if not actually bursting. Immediately after the failure of the Neapolitan Revolution, Piedmont rose in arms to demand a Constitution, but this movement failed owing to the weakness and treachery of the vacillating liberal-Jesuit Charles Albert, Prince of Carignano.

The Roman States, and more especially the Romagna, were in a state of smouldering rebellion and expectancy, awaiting the elusive signal from Naples. Byron, in Ravenna, followed the hopes and endeavours of his chosen compatriots with the keenest interest, the most whole-hearted enthusiasm. This extraordinary man, in whose constitution aristocratic pride and prejudice were so strangely blended with the love of liberty, revolutionary ardour, and the detestation of all forms of tyranny and cruelty and of public and private humbug, entered with his whole heart and soul into the feelings and struggles of the Carbonari. An intense and almost personal hatred of injustice, tyranny, and foreign usurpation, an equally sincere detestation of Austria and "*i Tedeschi*," a decided sympathy for the Italians and more especially for the brave and loyal Romagnuoli, and last, but perhaps not least, the influence of Teresa Guiccioli and her family were the prime incentives for his attitude. Teresa's brother, the young Count Pietro Gamba—a brave, simple-hearted gentleman, and an enthusiastic patriot—was Byron's

constant companion at this time, and initiated him into the mysteries of the Carbonari : Byron himself became a chief of the sect known as the "*Americani*."

The police-spies and informers, who formed such an important factor in Austrianized Italy, watched Byron's every movement with suspicion and wonder, and constantly sent in reports of the "erratic Lord's" movements to headquarters in Rome. The account given by the Director of Police in Bologna to the General Director of Police in Rome is refreshingly ingenuous :

"Byron is a man of letters," he writes, "and his literary merit will attract to him the most distinguished men of learning in Bologna. This class of men has no love for the Government." But the good man was sorely perplexed how to deal with this puzzling and perturbing customer.

Byron's journal, and his letters—which were constantly opened by the police—are eloquent of his Italian sympathies, and of his contempt for Austria and its surveillance. In one letter (in the hope that it might be opened and read by the "Huns") he expresses the opinion, set forth in his most legible handwriting, that they were "damned scoundrels and barbarians, their emperor a fool, and themselves more fools than he"—all which they might send to Vienna for anything he cared.

These letters and journal are highly interesting as an indication of the temper of men's minds around him, and of the intensely excited and critical state of public feeling. Byron knew what he was talking about, understood and sympathized with the Italians and their cause, and lived among them as one of themselves—not as a stranger and a dilettante on-

looker. He understood and spoke and wrote the language currently, if not perfectly correctly. It was his boast that he had "lived among the Italians—not *Florence* and *Rome* and galleried and Conversationed it for a few months, and then home again—but been of their families, and friendships, and feuds, and loves, and councils, and correspondence, in a part of Italy least known to foreigners"—and been among them of all classes, from the Conte to the Contadino.

On the 9th December, 1820, he writes to Moore : "In these parts they are all going to war ; and there is to be liberty, and a row, and a constitution—when they can get them." On the same day the Commander of the Papal troops was assassinated close by Byron's house at the corner of the street leading out of the present Via Cavour to the Church of San Vitale—a fact which, as Byron said, showed the state of the country better than he could.

On the 7th January the Carbonari were in full expectation of an attack from the Government and its party. Pietro Gamba asked Byron what should be done. He answered : "Fight for it, rather than be taken in detail," and offered, as he records in his journal, "if any of them are in immediate apprehension of arrest, to receive them in my house (which is defensible), and to defend them, with my servants and themselves (we have arms and ammunition), as long as we can, or to try to get them away under cloud of night."

On the night of the 7th January Byron did not go to bed ; he preferred to sit up in anxious and momentary expectation of the sound of drum and musketry ; but only theplash of the rain in the

deserted streets, and the gusts of wind at intervals interrupted the silence of the night.

Such was the state of public expectation everywhere : on all hands men were at the end of their patience with the state of affairs, yet no one knew how or where to begin the change. Byron declared that the ferment in men's minds could not be conceived without seeing it ; yet all effort seemed futile and inconclusive. The fatal lack of unity and concerted organization for a definite purpose, so characteristic of Italians outside their Church, was everywhere apparent. Neither courage, nor goodwill, nor a good cause was wanting, but efforts were isolated and abortive—doomed to failure. Byron complains of hearing of nothing but war—but meanwhile the Carbonari were without plans. At times he expresses disgust and exasperation, and refers to them as assassins and blockheads among whom it was difficult to play his part. He regrets their lack of direction and clear purpose, and complains (24th January) that "the principal persons in the events which may occur in a few days are gone out on a *shooting party*" . . . nothing more or less than a "real snivelling, popping, small-shot, water-hen waste of powder, ammunition, and shot. . . ."

But the great beauty and splendour—the intense poetry of the Italian ideal, which Byron saw in its full grandeur, appealed to him most powerfully and irresistibly, dominating and overshadowing the disappointment of any weakness or failure. "The very *poetry* of politics" he calls it. "Only think—a free Italy !!! Why there has been nothing like it since the days of Augustus." No effort and no sacrifice could be too great, he declares, for the accomplish-

ment of this desire—the extinction of “that Sigh of Ages”—and he offers himself and his possessions on behalf of the cause.

“I always had an idea that it would be *bungled*,” he writes later in his diary, “but was willing to hope, and am so still. Whatever I can do by money, means, or person, I will venture freely for their freedom; and have so repeated to them (some of the Chiefs here) half an hour ago. I have two thousand five hundred scudi, better than five hundred pounds, in the house, which I offered to begin with.” The Carbonari chiefs met at Byron’s house, and there discussed the situation and ways and means; and his lower apartments were full of their “bayonets, fusils, cartridges, and what not”—which they not very heroically returned there in great haste when the projected rising miscarried.

Throughout February Lord Byron and his companions anxiously awaited the belated signals from without. The Romagnuoli were prepared for a general uprising on the 15th of the month, before the “Barbarians” should march through towards the Neapolitan kingdom; on the 9th they learnt that their plans were frustrated by the fact that the enemy’s army had actually passed through two days previously! On the 24th Byron enters in his journal: “The secret intelligence arrived this morning from the frontier to the C[arbonari] is as bad as possible. The *plan* has missed—the Chiefs are betrayed, military, as well as civil—and the Neapolitans not only have *not* moved, but have declared to the P[apal] government, and to the Barbarians, that they know nothing of the matter!! Thus the world goes, and thus the Italians are always

lost for lack of union among themselves." A few days later, the fate of Southern Italy—and with it the fate of all the projects and risings which depended on its succour—was settled for the time by the miserable failure of the constitutional forces in the gorges of Antrodoco. Claire Clairmont notes in her diary for the 18th March : " Arrival at Florence of General Fardelli from Naples, who brings an act of submission and respect from the Parliament and troops to the King. In the evening go to the Princess Montemiletto, who exclaims : ' Vous savez, vous savez que tout est fini ! '"

Byron felt the disappointment keenly, and wrote with much bitterness about the Neapolitans. Yet while he complains that his southern neighbours had bungled Italy out of freedom for these five hundred years to come, and condemns the Neapolitans at times for cowardice and treachery—approving even of Tom Moore's savage lines against them which aroused the indignation of Shelley—he did not lose his faith in the finer elements of Italian patriotism which were yet to reanimate a nation.¹ But for the time he regretfully abandons politics as too disheartening a subject to pursue.

¹ In the "Pellegrino" Hotel in Bologna, where Byron stayed in August and September, 1819, there is a very fine commemorative inscription composed by Carducci :—"Here in August and September, 1818 (*sic*), dwelt, conspiring for liberty, George Gordon Lord Byron, who to Greece gave his life, to Italy his heart and his genius.—Than whom none among moderns has arisen more able to combine action with poesy, none more eminent and sympathizing [*pietoso*] in singing the glories and the misfortunes of our people."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE WILLIAMSSES—SHELLEY AND JANE WILLIAMS—BOATING WITH WILLIAMS—RETURN TO BAGNI DI PISA

WITH the arrival of the Williamses in the early days of 1821, the scattered friendships and acquaintances which had fallen to Shelley's lot so far during his sojourn in Italy gradually gave way to the formation of a circle whose friendship and sympathy were in many respects a real pleasure and solace to the poet.

This last year and a half of his life was the most fixed and changeless period of Shelley's agitated and impetuous career. The eternal youth of the idealist still endured, a shade less buoyant than of yore, in his mind and his writings ; but there is a certain sense of matured disillusion in the midst of his content. After the passing of Emilia Viviani, we feel that his friendships became more personal and concrete than they had ever been before, less ideal and purely symbolic of that which dwelt—sometimes, indeed, with no separate existence—in his own soul.

On the 13th January Lieutenant Edward Ellerker Williams, with his wife Jane, and their infant son, Edward Medwin, arrived in Leghorn. They came to Italy after a year spent in Geneva and some months in Chalon-sur-Saône, gradually drawn south-

ward by the sun and warmth. As Williams puts it in his diary some months later : " . . . we actually found ourselves in Italy, awoke as it were from a dream, and with much the same sensation as wandering Arabs must experience when they find suddenly a spot of green in the desert."

As the sun acted as a magnet to Italy, so Shelley—through the medium of Medwin's enthusiasm—acted as a magnet to Pisa. Medwin, as we have already quoted from Trelawny's narrative, lured his entire little Geneva circle towards Pisa and the " inspired boy " whose virtues and genius he was never tired of extolling. Medwin speaks of the Williamses as among his oldest and best friends, but the intimacy with them does not appear to date back farther than the period of their service in India, where they both held commissions in the 8th Dragoons, from which they retired on half-pay when they returned to Europe in 1819. Williams had been to school at Eton, where he must actually have been at the same time as Shelley was there ; he early entered the Navy, which he subsequently left for the Army. His charming and beautiful wife was a sister, Medwin tells us, of General John Wheeler Cleveland, of the Madras Army. Their union appears to have been uncommonly happy and harmonious, with a solid foundation of mutual trust and understanding which defied initial obstacles that might have been regarded as insurmountable.

On landing in Leghorn the Williamses proceeded straight to Pisa, where Medwin introduced them to Shelley and Mary. The journey from Lyons southward had been one of intense discomfort and suffering to poor Jane Williams, then near the date of

her second confinement ; and at Pisa, two months after her arrival, her daughter Rosalind was born.

Shelley's first impression of Jane Williams is given in a letter to Claire. On the evening of Tuesday, the 16th January, he writes :

"The Williamses are come, and Mrs. W[illiams] dined here to-day—an extremely pretty and gentle woman, apparently not *very* clever. I like her very much."

Mary writes a few days later : "Jane is certainly very pretty, but she wants animation. . . . Ned seems the picture of good-humour and obligingness. He is lively and possesses great talent in drawing, so that with him one is never at a loss for subjects of conversation."

It is not an easy matter to analyse what were precisely Shelley's feelings for Jane Williams ; nor is it incumbent on us to do so except in so far as it may elucidate his poetry. Whatever they may have been, they were, so far as he revealed them to his friends, of a kind that Edward Williams, who was deeply in love with his wife, and Jane, who was equally fond of her husband, could sympathize with. All Shelley's poems to Jane passed through Edward Williams's hands, so Medwin tells us. "A purer being than Mrs. Williams cannot exist," he declares. "Not a breath of scandal could possibly attach to her fame." Nor do I believe that any one has ever been foolish enough to seek to attach it. But the fact remains that in some of Shelley's love poems of this period—which must have been inspired, if by any mortal woman, by Jane Williams—there is an almost tragic depth of feeling, which suggests that the poet may have felt more than

the lady realized. He was unhappy and stinted in sympathy in his own home ; and Jane appeared to him as an embodiment of peace, and sweetness, and joy, such as he had ever sought and pursued in shadows, and now felt more definitely concentrated than ever before in a living woman. So far as one can translate untranslatable feelings, Shelley was in love with Jane Williams, as he was in love with all beauty, all charm, all *gentilezza*, a word for which neither our kindness, nor our gentleness, nor our nobility is an exact equivalent. Jane was, no doubt, no less faultless than Emilia Viviani, or whatsoever other embodiment of beauty Shelley may have loved : certainly she was in many respects the inferior of Mary Shelley, whose external coldness and poverty of sympathy, and not unhuman jealousy, now somewhat repelled her husband. Shelley was not totally blind, indeed, to occasional glimpses of the foot of clay, which Jane revealed in her excursions among the saucepans of the Villa Magni. But she continued to fascinate him with her beauty, her sweetness of temper, her womanly tact and intuitive sympathy, and, above all, her music and her lovely voice. In later years, many years after these days in Italy were passed and buried, Mary, who had loved, and protected, and faithfully stood by the friend who shared in her bereavement, and whom for so many sad, lingering years she had looked on as her dearest and best-loved friend—the loved companion of her happier days, of her despair, of her widowhood—bitterly lamented that so much charm should have concealed poverty of real feeling, malice, and ingratitude. In 1827, after Jane Williams had united herself to Shelley's old friend Thomas Jefferson

Hogg, Mary learned that her friend's affection for herself had been all on the surface, and that Jane was wont to talk in a manner to cause her the keenest pain. "Once independent of Mary, and under other protection, she talked away for the benefit and amusement of other people—talked of their past life, prating of her powers over Shelley and his devotion to her—of Mary's gloom during those sad first weeks at Lerici—intimating that jealousy of herself was the cause."¹ Mary was for the time utterly crushed by the discovery ; alone with her own heart, she tasted to the full its bitterness. If this account be correct it reveals little real gentility of feeling in Jane Williams. If her boastings were true, it was the more unkind.

To a jealous, exclusive, and sensitive nature like Mary Shelley's, Shelley's "platonics" must have caused acute suffering, no doubt ; but there is, in general, little sympathy for the wives of geniuses, and we would not willingly lose a verse or a single line to save their feelings, did their lives depend on it. It is their part to endure : and Mary Shelley, on the whole, endured whatever pangs fell to her lot with considerable dignity.

What seems more particularly to have charmed the Shelleys in these new acquaintances was their extreme simplicity and naturalness, their absence of all sham and show, their sincerity, and goodness of heart and feeling. Jane, we are told, besides being an uncommonly pretty woman, was a very tactful and amiable one, devoted to her husband and children, an excellent housekeeper, and, while "not very clever," was gifted with considerable musical talent and a sweet singing voice—a lady who com-

¹ So writes Mrs. Marshall in her "Life of Mary Shelley."

bined the domestic virtues with great charm of manner and that degree of adaptability which in some women stands in good stead of broad-mindedness and deep understanding. In many ways she must have been the opposite of Mary Shelley, who was very studious and clever, but a bad housekeeper and somewhat tough and unpliant. "Ned," besides the refreshing simplicity and straightforwardness of his character, was a man of some talent, literary and artistic, but modest and unpretentious to a degree that his good friend Tom Medwin would not have done ill to emulate. He was bread-minded and unprejudiced in his views, as is shown by the valuable little diary he kept during the last nine months of his life; intelligent, observant, most laudably free from all spite or prettiness of mind, and with a keen appreciation for poetry and literature. The company of Shelley, his extraordinary intellect, and his poetic genius, were a source of constant delight to him.

Shelley and Williams had many tastes in common; or Williams, anyway, managed with admirable promptness and success to adapt his tastes to those of his remarkable new friend. Trelawny says that Williams gave up all his accustomed sports for books, and the bettering of his mind; that he had, moreover, excellent natural ability, and that Shelley delighted to see the seeds he had sown germinating. But besides reading, writing poetry, and studying, Williams entered with zest into Shelley's other great pleasure, vying with him in the love of that element which was to prove so fatal to them both, and which was destined to link their names for ever together. Williams shared his friend's passion for boating;

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and, the sea not being then immediately at hand, they procured a boat and contented themselves, for the most part, with sailing about on the Arno.

The water under almost any form—river, sea, lake, canal, or humble and prosaic pond—always held the most potent fascination for Shelley ; his poetry is rich with his love for it—of its beauty, its grandeur, its sublimity, its energy, its repose, and its mysteries. As a boy and a young man, he used to sail paper boats on the Serpentine and on a pond near Primrose Hill. Medwin says that as a schoolboy at Eton he found his greatest pleasure in boating ; at a maturer age he constantly contrived to enjoy this pleasure, on sea, river, or lake—on the Thames, on the Lake of Geneva ; even the English Channel he crossed in a small rowing-boat. And now, to the amazement of the Pisans, Shelley procured a small flat-bottomed boat, ten feet long, from Leghorn, light enough to navigate the shallow waters of the Arno, in which he and Williams spent hours on the swift-flowing, tawny river.

Shelley's boating experiences with his new craft began with disaster—an accident which he took with his habitual sangfroid. He and Williams, on the night of the 16th April, fetched the little boat from Leghorn to Pisa, navigating in her by night the canal which connects the two cities. Fortunately, Mrs. Gisborne insisted on Henry, who was an excellent swimmer, forming one of the party. When half-way on the miniature voyage, Williams—whose early experience in the Navy had apparently left him in considerable ignorance of the simplest rules of seamanship—rose to his feet, and laid hold of the mast to steady himself, and capsized the boat. Shelley

FISHERMAN'S CABIN, MARINA, PISA



was never perturbed by such accidents, and Lord Byron has attested his cool courage when in a perilous situation on the Lake of Geneva ; and now he would inevitably have been drowned but for the presence and timely assistance of the young engineer, who gives the following account of the incident :

" That canal is broad and deep ; so finding no bottom, I sent Williams on shore, as he could swim a little, and then caught hold of Shelley, and told him to be calm and quiet, and I would take him on shore. His answer, characteristic of his undaunted courage, was : ' All right ; never more comfortable in my life ; do what you will with me.' But as soon as I set him down on shore, he fell flat down on his face in a faint."

In writing to Reveley the day after the disaster, Shelley declares that his ducking had added fire to instead of quenching his nautical ardour. Shelley did not properly enter into possession of his beloved boat till the early days of May, after which he constantly spent his time sailing about the Arno and occasionally venturing on the more ambitious voyage, partly by sea, to Leghorn.

The exercise and elation of spirit he thus obtained came opportunely enough at a period of considerable depression and nervous susceptibility. The burden of Emilia Viviani, whose sorrow and complicated troubles became, of course, the portion of her devoted friend, who sacrificed time and money to promote her welfare—writing petitions for her, visiting her almost daily, and no doubt keeping the somewhat recalcitrant Mary up to the mark in sympathy and attentions—was just now sufficiently weighty. " As much comfort as she receives from

my attachment to her, *I lose*," he wrote. The "burden of Tom," whose capacity for boring had long palled on the Shelleys, and from which the arrival of the Williamses only partially relieved them ; disgust or disappointment with one or other of his friends and acquaintances ; anxiety and disappointment caused by the trend of public affairs in Italy ; a lack of sympathy or complete harmony in his home, and, on and off, some considerable degree of nervous ill-health, combined to make him unhappy and morbidly irritable.

In a letter of the 16th January to Claire he wrote :

" [My health] is far better than it has been, and the relapse which I now suffer into a state of ease from one of pain, is attended with such an excessive susceptibility of nature, that I suffer equally from pleasure and from pain. You will ask me naturally enough *where I find any pleasure?* The wind, the light, the air, the smell of a flower, affects me with violent emotions. There needs no catalogue of the causes of pain." And again, on the 29th April, he writes : " My health is in general much the same ; somewhat amended by the divine weather that has fallen upon us, but still characterized by irritability and depression, or moments of almost supernatural elevation of spirits."

During the winter of 1820 Medwin attempted to allay his friend's nervous symptoms, which at that time often caused him very intense pain, by the effects of hypnotism—or, as it was then termed, "animal magnetism." The poet was evidently susceptible, and fell easily into the hypnotic sleep. During one of these experiments Medwin records

that he improvised some faultless verses in Italian, although at that period he had never written any. This detail is particularly curious and interesting in view of the alleged Italian version of the "Epipsy-chidion," which, if it ever was written, must have been done about this date or very shortly after. In Claire's diary for the 15th December, 1820, the following entry occurs : "Mr. Taafe calls in the evening. Shelley is magnetized [presumably by Medwin]. He begs them not to ask him more questions because he shall say what he ought not."

After Medwin's departure from Pisa, early in 1821, Jane Williams took his place in mesmerizing Shelley, a circumstance which gave rise to the verses "The Magnetic Lady to her Patient," written in 1822.

Thus passed the early months of 1821 : divided between Emilia Viviani, with her inspiring beauty and her perturbing sorrows, Mavrocordato and his Greek enthusiasms, the congenial and sympathetic company of the Williamises, and the delight of boating which afforded such undivided pleasure to the poet. On the 12th May Shelley and his family returned for the summer months to the Baths of San Giuliano.

CHAPTER XIX

THE DEATH OF KEATS AND "ADONAIIS"

THE most memorable fact connected with Shelley's second stay in the Baths of San Giuliano is the composition of his Elegy on the death of Keats.

In the autumn of 1820 John Keats came to die in Italy. He was barely twenty-five years of age. The terrible malady inherited from his mother, which had recently killed his brother Tom, and which had finally and fatally declared itself in his own constitution in the preceding February, was by then too far advanced to allow of any other significance being given to the journey.

Worn out in spirit and body, with shattered hopes and nerves ; his soul embittered by a sense of the injustice and cruelty of Fate and the niggardliness with which Fortune and his fellows had recompensed the gifts he had offered ; exasperated, above all, by the passions and ambitions which his malady had not deadened, but rather aggravated while rendering them a vain and hopeless torment—he came to shed the last wrecks of his wretched mortality away from the inhospitable shores of his native land. The ardent and generous spirit of Shelley, the passionate and vital

personality of Byron, and the exasperated and dying energies of Keats, were indiscriminately vomited forth by England on to the Italian shore. Italy had become the refuse-heap for our outcast and unheeded genius, for, as Sir Philip Sidney had lamented more than two centuries earlier, England was become "so hard a stepmother to poets." In Italy Byron and Shelley were to live their lives and to do their best work ; but Keats arrived too late to do aught but breathe his last bitterness and leave it recorded on his tomb.

Keats sailed from London on the 18th September, together with his devoted friend Joseph Severn, a student painter at the Royal Academy. The progress of the ship was considerably delayed by bad weather, and Naples was reached at last late in October.

Shelley and Keats had met more than once in Leigh Hunt's house in Hampstead in the years 1817 and 1818, but the suspicious and guarded nature of John Keats—a little hostile towards a rival poet and a man born in a different station in life—had not permitted any decided sympathy to grow up between them. Medwin tells us that the "Revolt of Islam" and "Endymion" were in part the outcome of a friendly rivalry, both poets having agreed to write a long poem within a given period of six months. This same year, 1817, Keats declined Shelley's invitation to visit him in Marlow, fearing lest his influence might have a detrimental effect on his own original development as a poet. It is further alleged that at this time Keats entertained a morbid suspicion that both Shelley and Hunt desired to disparage him.

"Endymion," published in 1818, met with a rude reception from the world of licensed critics. With

the same eagerness with which they fell on the "Revolt of Islam" and its author, the press-hounds swooped down on poor Keats; but the ferocity which the critics apportioned to Shelley and his work was replaced, in dealing with the younger and more sensitive poet, by simple ridicule and contempt.

Shelley displayed the keen and rarely erring judgment which distinguished him as a critic in his estimate of "Endymion," which he did not, however, read till a year after its publication. His entire enthusiasm for Keats was not aroused till after reading his third volume of poetry in the autumn of 1820, when the fragment of "Hyperion," apparently to the exclusion of the other masterpieces contained in the volume (though we may perhaps trust Medwin's assertion that this was not the case), awakened his unbounded enthusiasm. "If the 'Hyperion' be not grand poetry," he wrote to Peacock, "none has been produced by our contemporaries." In the entire course of his relations with Keats, Shelley was ever ready with unstinted if not unqualified praise, chivalrous championship, counsel, and help. Keats, a little ungraciously, declined them all.

On the 27th July, 1820, after hearing from Mr. Gisborne of the dangerous accident Keats had recently sustained (the breaking of a bloodvessel, which marked a further stage in his fatal illness), Shelley wrote a highly friendly and sympathetic letter advising him to winter in Italy, and offering him hospitality so long as he might find Pisa or its neighbourhood agreeable. This letter Keats answered a little evasively in August without definitely declining Shelley's invitation, and "returning advice on

his hands" by disparaging "The Cenci" and advising its author to furl his wings and write less, in return for Shelley's gently qualified praise of "Endymion." Shelley's first letter—the only one which has been preserved to us—was apparently followed by two others. Joseph Severn has left it on record that a letter reached Keats in Naples some time in November, from Shelley in Pisa, "urging him to come northward and be the guest of him and his wife; a most generous letter." Severn can scarcely have been thinking of the letter of the 27th July, which undoubtedly reached Keats in England, more especially as he definitely states that it was the second letter Keats had received from "that fine poet and noble man."

About this same time, presumably, Shelley penned the unfinished letter to the Editor of the *Quarterly Review*, in which he pleads for a little more common justice and humanity in the treatment of the young author, whom he declares to have been most injuriously affected by his criticism. In his fragmentary letter he sums up in a most masterly manner the merits and defects of "Endymion," and upholds "Hyperion" as being mostly "in the very highest style of poetry." On the 18th February, Shelley wrote to Claire that Keats was "very ill in Naples," and that he had written to him there urging him to come to Pisa, without, however, this time inviting him to his house, as they were "not rich enough for that sort of thing." This third letter no doubt never reached Keats. Since the early days of December Keats and his faithful friend Severn had been in Rome; and in any case it was by then too late for any counsel or any help to avail. Keats, who since

so many weeks had ceased to live—"lived posthumously" as he desperately put it—was by now in the final agonies of approaching dissolution.

Towards the end of January a fresh relapse ensued, from which Keats was not to rally, though he lingered yet some agonising weeks; and on the 23rd February, at 11 o'clock in the evening, the end of the long agony came.

Shelley did not hear of Keats's death till nearly two months after its occurrence, when he probably learnt of it from the pages of the *Examiner*, or from a letter from Horace Smith. He was deeply moved at the news, not so much from any strong personal attachment to the dead poet as from a sense of the irreparable loss which poetry sustained by his untimely death, and a generous fervour of indignation against those whom he considered, in their blindness or their envy of Keats's excellence, to have embittered his life and accelerated his end.

The Colonel Finch whose account of Keats's last days reached Shelley through his friend John Gisborne was well known among the English in Italy as a student of Italian literature. He had lived much in Rome, having occupied Keats's apartment in the Piazza di Spagna previous to the young poet's tenancy of it, and he was presumably in Rome at the time of Keats's death; but Severn does not refer to him. Byron makes no mention of Colonel Finch in his correspondence, but must have met him in Milan in 1816. Hobhouse speaks of him as something very like a bore, while Dr. John Polidori, in his diary for October, 1816, refers to "Colonel Finch, an extremely pleasant, good-natured, well-informed, clever gentleman; spoke Italian extremely well, and



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was very well read in Italian literature . . . Finch is a great admirer of architecture and Italy."

Shelley must have commenced writing "Adonais" shortly after hearing of Keats's death, and by the 11th June he announced it to Ollier as ready for publication.

The early portion of this elegy—surely the most costly monument ever erected by a poet to a brother bard—is written in a spirit of sorrow and universal lamentation for the untimely death of Keats, and of consuming contempt and indignation against those "deaf and viperous" beings (the critics), whom Shelley believed, by their malice and cruelty, to have hastened his end. The latter half of the poem, from the thirty-eighth stanza onward, is rather a paean of rejoicing over the change which lifted the ceremonialments of life from the now emancipated spirit of the poet.

"He hath awakened from the dream of life,"

Shelley writes, and he now forms part of the immortality of Nature. Francis Thompson, in his beautifully expressed essay on Shelley, indignantly rejects this conception of immortality, which, compared with his ardent Christian and Catholic faith in personal immortality, appears to him a miserable threadbare cloak cast over the utter nudity of annihilation.

The fact is there is a certain confusion in "Adonais" between the conception of this vague and doubtful pantheistic immortality which consists in becoming "one with Nature" and that of a more definite personal immortality; but Shelley's conception of the latter must, I assume, be taken rather as signifying that relative immortality of fame which

we conceive as lasting as long as this world of ours and the memory of man shall endure. Indeed, in a certain limited sense, the poem is a glorification of mortal fame.

Shelley prognosticated that "Adonais" was "little adapted for popularity"; and that it certainly proved to be. The few copies which—for the sake of accuracy—he had printed in Pisa, and transmitted thence to the publisher in London, proved a sufficient supply to meet the public demand. No further edition was published till seven years after the poet's death, when it was reprinted by a group of young Shelley and Keats enthusiasts in Cambridge.

"Adonais" always remained a favourite with its author—"the least imperfect" of his compositions, "a highly-wrought *piece of art*, and perhaps better, in point of composition, than anything I have written" he describes it. To Ollier he wrote in November, 1821: "I confess I should be surprised if *that* poem were born to an immortality of oblivion."

CHAPTER XX

BAGNI DI PISA—JOURNEYS TO FLORENCE AND RAVENNA—RENEWED
INTERCOURSE WITH BYRON—BYRON'S STRANGE HOUSEHOLD

THE latter weeks of spring and the summer passed uneventfully and quietly for the Shelleys in the Bagni di Pisa, where they again took up their residence at the Casa Prinni. This year the monotony of life at the Baths was relieved by the pleasure of boating on the Serchio-fed canal which runs through the village, and by the vicinity of good friends. The Williamses took for the summer months the Villa of the Marchese Poschi at Pugnano, some four miles distant from the Bagni di Pisa, and connected with it by the canal, which facilitated communication between the friends. "It was a pleasant summer," Mary wrote in her note to the poems of 1821; "bright in all but Shelley's health and inconstant spirits." Medwin considers it to have been one of the happiest summers Shelley spent abroad.

The charming unfinished poem, "The Boat on the Serchio," belongs to this period, and is eloquent of the soothing and revivifying effect which life under any circumstances on the water exercised over Shelley's spirits; the verses are buoyant and fresh

and full of the joy of living. Many of his shorter lyrics and fragments also belong to these months, some of his most exquisite love-lyrics—so Medwin and probability vouch for—being addressed to Jane Williams.

In the spring of 1821 Shelley's valued friend Horace Smith, of the "Rejected Addresses," contemplated visiting Italy with his wife: the visit was postponed for various reasons, but was again mooted later in the summer, and on the 29th July Shelley went to Florence house-hunting for himself and his friends there. The Gisbornes, who had been his guests at the Baths, and were again leaving for England, accompanied him on the road. Shelley's efforts to find suitable apartments failed, and the Smiths' visit to Italy was finally abandoned altogether. Horace Smith had always been a loyal and valuable friend to Shelley, and twice during his residence in Italy rendered him very timely assistance.

In April, 1821, the friendly intervention and sound business capacity of the poet-stockbroker helped Shelley out of a serious difficulty, when, owing to the rascally ingenuity of his own and Sir Timothy's lawyers (who took advantage of some slight delay in the payment of the allowance due to Dr. Hume for the maintenance of Shelley's children by his first marriage), Shelley's income was suddenly and mysteriously stopped and a suit in Chancery commenced. Horace Smith's vigorous and businesslike intervention saved the situation, which might have had very serious consequences for the poet.

A little later Horace Smith came once again to his friend's assistance in applying for an injunction

against the piratical publishers of the privately printed "Queen Mab," who by reprinting and circulating in large numbers that early and virulent exposition of faith were working considerable damage to the poet's already torn and tattered reputation. The critical watch-dogs, ever on the alert to make a little noise against Shelley, were hereby aroused once more to a loud volley of barking and howling. Horace Smith's intervention on this occasion proved in vain, as also that of the Society for the Suppression of Vice, which very comically co-operated in his effort—for a work of such immoral tendencies was decreed an outlaw from the laws of copyright protection! All this hubbub brought Shelley the only literary success of his lifetime, without, however, bringing him any monetary emolument.

On returning from his fruitless expedition to Florence on the 2nd August, Shelley found another journey prepared for him. A letter from Byron, the exact text of which is not known, arrived for him on the same day, urging him to set out without delay for Ravenna.

The miscarriage of the Carbonari uprising in the early months of 1821 had naturally been followed by the usual course of reaction, which in this instance took the form of the proscription, without trial or procedure, of many of the first families of the Romagna and the Papal States in general. Byron looked on with sorrow and indignation at the exodus from Ravenna of so many of her most worthy and high-minded citizens. ". . . Everything is in confusion and grief," he wrote; "it is a kind of thing which cannot be described without an equal pain as in beholding it." In writing to Murray a few days

later he says that as many of his friends were among the exiles, he, too, thought of moving.

Among these friends were the Gambas, father and son, and with them Teresa Guiccioli, who, in the absence of her father, was again in peril of being confined in a convent. About half-way through July the family retired to Florence, and there awaited Byron's decision, ready to accompany him to Switzerland, or elsewhere, should he so decide.

Byron himself remained on in Ravenna in a state of indecision and inertia, very reluctant to quit a town where his sympathies and interests had taken deep root. His object in remaining there existed no longer : his mistress, his friends, his quasi-family were gone ; his political hopes and projects were at an end ; disappointment and despondency were over all things. But in these latter years of Byron's life, while his thoughts travelled with their wonted velocity, his actions were wont to follow after somewhat sluggishly. How many journeys and projects had he debated and announced of recent years, only to drop and abandon them for lack of energy ! In writing to Byron in the early months of 1821, Shelley had evidently urged him to undertake "a great poem," and in answering him, on the 25th April, Byron averred that he had neither the inclination nor the power to do so. "As I grow older," he wrote, "the indifference—*not* to life, for we love it by instinct—but to the stimuli of life, increases." Moreover, the late failure of the Italians, he added, had disappointed him for many reasons, some public, some personal.

In this frame of mind Byron felt the necessity of consulting with some one on whose judgment

and friendship he could rely, and he had recourse to Shelley.

One of the principal objects of the Government in exiling the Gambas was undoubtedly the hope that its more intangible and redoubtable opponent, Lord Byron, might see fit to follow them. For four months, however, he remained on in Ravenna, determined on departure, but slow in making up his mind to take the actual step. His time meanwhile was no doubt fully occupied in attending to settling up his affairs there and disbanding his very miscellaneous household, also in doing whatever lay in his power on behalf of the numerous families exiled from Ravenna and the vicinity. There was a certain satisfaction, moreover, in defying the annoyance of the "Barbarians," who did not dare interfere directly with an English peer. His impending departure caused much grief to the people of Ravenna—more especially the poorest classes, among whom he was ever popular for his liberality and goodness of heart; in despair they presented a petition to the Cardinal Legate begging that their protector might not be suffered to depart from their midst. A token of how much Byron was loved in Ravenna is the fact that a poor fellow lost his life in a vain effort to save his dog shortly before he left that city.

Shelley left Pisa on the 3rd August, spent the 4th, his twenty-ninth birthday, with Claire in Leghorn, and arrived in Ravenna on the evening of the 6th, where he was received very cordially by Lord Byron, with whom he sat talking till five. Byron was still living in the stately though somewhat forbidding Palazzo Guiccioli, surrounded by his motley retinue of servants and yet more miscellaneous

menagerie of beasts. Readers of Moore's Life of the poet will remember the Irishman's dismay at finding himself compelled to share Byron's palace in Venice with dogs and monkeys ; but, indeed, Byron's passion for beasts dated back to the days of his boyhood. Occasional references to his quaint house-mates may be found in the journal which he kept in January and February, 1821, as, for instance, when he "beat the crow for stealing the falcon's victuals."

Shelley's impression of Byron, whom he had not seen for close on three years, and of his extraordinary household is given in his letters. "Lord Byron is very well, and was delighted to see me," he wrote to Mary on the morning after his arrival. "He has in fact completely recovered his health, and lives a life totally the reverse of that which he led at Venice. He has a permanent sort of liaison with Contessa Guiccioli, who is now at Florence, and seems from her letters to be a very amiable woman. . . ."

His life from day to day under Byron's régime Shelley describes in writing to Peacock : "Lord Byron gets up at two. I get up, quite contrary to my usual custom (but one must sleep or die, like Southey's sea-snake in 'Kehama'), at twelve. After breakfast we sit talking till six. From six till eight we gallop through the pine forests which divide Ravenna from the sea ; we then come home and dine, and sit up gossiping till six in the morning. I don't suppose this will kill me in a week or fortnight, but I shall not try it longer."

What Byron particularly desired in sending for Shelley was the advantage of his sound judgment and counsel in deciding where and how to settle

on leaving Ravenna. As the Countess Guiccioli was intimately affected by his decision it was a very delicate question to submit to the arbitration of another. But Byron knew that he could rely on Shelley's perfect good feeling and judgment. As for himself, he was swayed by too many conflicting emotions, or lack of emotion, to render a decision an easy matter. He felt himself bound by honour, as he more than once declared, to stand by his mistress : her birth, her rank, her devotion to himself, and the sacrifices she had made on its account, all bound him not to leave her in the lurch in an unseemly manner ; though indications are numerous that his feelings for her were somewhat lukewarm, and partaking of the nature of liking and gratitude rather than of passion. Leigh Hunt emphatically asserts that they were not either deeply in love with the other when he knew them in Pisa. Byron's problem now was mainly how to behave in a seemly and becoming manner towards her without unduly inconveniencing himself. Teresa Guiccioli and her brother decidedly favoured Switzerland as a place of residence, and Byron took some steps in the direction of satisfying this preference, but his own recollection of gossip and annoyance on the occasion of his previous residence there, and Shelley's arguments, deterred him from this settlement.

" L[ord] B[yrong] prefers Tuscany or Lucca," Shelley wrote to Mary on the 10th, " and is trying to persuade them to adopt his views. He made *me* write a long letter to her to engage her to remain —an odd thing enough for an utter stranger to write on subjects of the utmost delicacy to his friend's mistress."

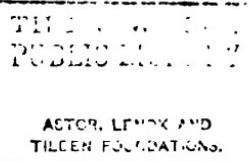
Lucca, Florence, Pisa, Siena, and possibly Prato or Pistoja, were under consideration—though the possibility of encountering Claire formed a serious obstacle to Pisa. On the day following, however, Shelley wrote to Mary that Byron had decided on Pisa, subject to the almost certain acquiescence of la Guiccioli, and that he desired inquiries almost immediately to be made for a large and magnificent house there, which he would furnish with his belongings from Ravenna.

Byron was very loth to see Shelley depart, and kept him as long as possible, even threatening that in his absence and that of his mistress he risked falling back into bad habits of life. "I then talk, and he listens to reason ;" Shelley writes, "and I earnestly hope that he is too well aware of the terrible and degrading consequences of his former mode of life, to be in danger from the short interval of temptation that will be left to him." On her side, Teresa Guiccioli was equally alarmed at the prospect of Byron remaining alone in Ravenna, fearing lest procrastination and temptation might claim him as their own and rob him from her ; and she wrote begging Shelley, whom she knew by fame only, not to leave her lover alone.

Shelley went about alone and saw something of the wonderful antiquities of Ravenna, in which Byron, curiously enough, seems to have taken so little interest, no doubt because his mind was taken up with living Italy—with the birth-throes of the new rather than with the grave of dead Italy. Indeed, Byron was blind to all beyond this living Italy, or this Italy which was destined to live. Italy was not to him a cemetery or a museum, as it was to his



THE CANAL AND PINETA, RAVENNA



travelling compatriots, who picked their way about amid the tombs, and regarded the living inhabitants—except when they were sufficiently dirty and ragged to add a touch of colour to the scenery—as a blotch on the sear autumn landscape. Shelley, though ready to welcome any effort on behalf of freedom, was less alive to the movement which was even then in progress, and blind to the better characteristics of the people. Whenever he arrived in a fresh region of Italy, he was struck with the savagery of the inhabitants and their language. On approaching Naples he noted this, and again from Ravenna he writes : “ Ravenna is a miserable place, the people are barbarous and wild, and their language the most infernal patois that you can imagine.” Shelley, however, took a somewhat more active interest in the antique monuments of Ravenna than his illustrious friend did, and he visited alone the various points of historic interest.

The only excursions he made in Byron's company were when, towards evening, the two poets sallied forth on horseback for a canter in the beautiful solitude of the pine-forest which stretches forty miles along the Adriatic coast and divides Ravenna and the adjacent swamps from the retreating sea, which once directly formed the eastern boundary of the city. In this low-lying and wave-washed forest, with its rich undergrowth of juniper, thorn, ash, and oak, eloquent with the thousand-tongued silences of Nature and Memory—memories then of Dante and Boccaccio, but now enriched with those of Shelley and Byron, and later of Garibaldi and of the dying Anita—Byron had been wont to ride daily during his residence in Ravenna, sometimes alone,

and sometimes in company with Pietro Gamba. Here he and the Americani sect of the Carbonari had occasionally met ; and he had heard them sing lustily songs of rebellion and freedom, and they had cheered him not less lustily as he rode by.

One longer excursion Shelley made by himself —to visit the child born under his fatherly protection, and early nurtured under his roof, his old favourite and playmate Allegra.

Since the early months of 1821 Allegra had been living in the Convent of Bagnacavallo, under the care and tutelage of the Capuchin nuns. Byron had found this the most suitable arrangement to make for the child, who, in the keeping of a lot of miscellaneous servants in his own house, had grown quite beyond control. Claire had been vehemently opposed to this arrangement, and had written several bitter and provoking letters to Byron, which had only succeeded in rousing his obstinate opposition. Shelley and Mary had, on the whole, concurred in the reasonableness of his decision, and, indeed, Byron seems throughout to have consistently sought the welfare of the child. Claire urged that the child should be given an English education in a boarding-school in England, rather than be left with the Italian nuns. This Byron was, not altogether unreasonably, opposed to. He considered that her chances in life might be happier in Italy, and brought up as a Catholic, than in England, where the circumstances of her birth would be against her. He knew the severe moral righteousness of his compatriots.

When Byron regarded Switzerland as his probable destination, he was fully aware of the impropriety of leaving Allegra behind, and very properly deter-

mined to take her with him to Geneva, where she would be under the care and supervision of the Guiccioli, whom he averred to be very fond of the child. When Byron's course was diverted from Switzerland to Pisa, Shelley's urgent and immediate care was to keep his too changeable friend to his purpose of taking Allegra with him ; but he suspected that the child's situation, in her father's house, under the régime of "dissolute men-servants," would be worse than her present one. He therefore urged Mary to make immediate inquiries with a view to placing the girl in some suitable Swiss or English family : let her consult Emilia Viviani if she had occasion to see her (but not by any means with a view to placing Allegra in the dreaded Convent of St. Anna), and Mrs. Mason, who might possibly consent to educate the child herself—but at all costs some suitable refuge must be found for her.

On the 14th August Shelley visited the little girl in her convent at Bagnacavallo. He found her well and cheerful, but grown more serious. She was still vivacious and mischievous enough as when she made Shelley "run all over the convent like a mad thing" to the confusion and dismay of the nuns, whom she afterwards summoned to prayer by ringing the convent tocsin, yet far more amenable to discipline than of yore. Her intellect did not appear to Shelley to be much cultivated ; but she was full of prayers and prodigious lists of saints, and talk and dreams of Paradise and angels, and was perpetually dis coursing on the "Bambino."

CHAPTER XXI

MORE SCANDAL AGAINST SHELLEY—BYRON'S PART IN IT—THE RELATIONS BETWEEN SHELLEY AND BYRON

DURING the first evening of his stay with Byron in Ravenna, Shelley learnt more about the vile slanders which had been hatched against him by his dismissed servant, Paolo Foggi, and his wife Elise, and learnt further that the Hopners had given credence to the story, and had on this account withdrawn their friendship and confidence. The allegation, as he now learnt from Byron's lips, was to the effect that Claire, in the winter following their stay in Este, had given birth to a child, of which Shelley was the father, and that he, after a vain attempt to procure abortion, had actually torn the child from her and placed it in a foundling hospital. Also that he and Claire had united in offering insult and outrage to Mary !

Scandal in connection with Shelley and Claire was a matter of old date. Shelley in writing to Mary of this fresh batch of lies in his first letter from Ravenna, thus refers to it :

"Elise says that Claire was my mistress ; that is very well, and so far there is nothing new ; all the world has heard so much, and people may believe or not believe as they think good."

The rumour, indeed, had been afloat in one form or another ever since Claire attached herself to the eloping couple in 1814, and the birth of Allegra had furnished conclusive corroborative evidence. Nor is this to be wondered at, seeing that people in general are willing to give credence to anything under the sun but a pure or generous motive. The public is as easily deceived by a good action as by a clever swindle.

All this Shelley accepted and understood with his usual philosophy ; what shocked and outraged his feelings was the fact that persons like the Consul Hoppner and his wife—persons whose kindness and amiability he had experienced and who knew him personally—should believe such vile trash against him, and on such evidence.

"As to what Reviews and the world say," he wrote to Mary, "I do not care a jot ; but when persons who have known me are capable of conceiving of me—not that I have fallen into a great error, as would have been the living with Claire as my mistress—but that I have committed such unutterable crimes as destroying or abandoning a child, and that my own ! Imagine my despair of good ! . . . You should write to the Hoppners a letter refuting the charge. . . ."

Mary's answer, directed to Mrs. Hoppner, written immediately on receipt of her husband's letter—penned, that is to say, in the full heat of scorn and indignation which the perusal of its contents called forth—is as dignified and convincing a refutation as ever calumny retreated from, and displays Mary in the full truthfulness and nobility of her character.

Byron's part in this matter is considerably mystify-

ing, and has never been satisfactorily explained. That he acted a loyal friend's part in laying the whole matter before Shelley seems certain, and that in doing so he was himself fully convinced of the falseness of the imputations seems also highly probable. But his attitude before and after so doing is less convincing. The scandal itself—of which Shelley now learnt fresh details—was not new, being, in fact, the same matter for which Shelley consulted the lawyer Del Rosso in the summer of 1820. That Hoppner had long been prejudiced by it is apparent from a letter of Byron's directed to him, dated the 10th September, 1820, in which he writes :

" I regret that you have such a bad opinion of Shiloh [Shelley] ; you used to have a good one. Surely he has talent and honour, but is crazy against religion and morality. His tragedy is sad work ; but the subject renders it so. His 'Islam' had much poetry. You seem lately to have got some notion against him."

To this letter it would appear that Hoppner replied, setting forth the story he had heard against Shelley—not, we may suppose, in full embellishment of detail—for Byron wrote again on the 1st October as follows :

" The Shiloh story is true no doubt, though Elise is but a sort of *Queen's evidence*. You remember how eager she was to return to them, and then she goes away and abuses them. Of the facts, however, there can be little doubt ; it is just like them. You may be sure that I keep your counsel."

Now, in this letter Byron certainly encourages the scandal, or at any rate as much as he had then learnt of it ; and again in the spring of 1821 in

forwarding to Hoppner Claire's letter in which she wrote against Italian convent education, he adds the following postscript to it :

"Dr. Hoppner,—The moral part of the letter upon the Italians, &c., comes with an excellent grace from the writer now living with a *man* and his *wife*—and having planted a child in the N (?) Foundling," &c.

First, as regards the "man and his wife," Claire was at the time, and had been for several months past, residing in Florence, with Professor and Madame Bojti ; but Byron may not have been aware of this fact, and Claire's letter was addressed to him from Pisa, and merely refers to a recent "visit" to Florence. The "man and his wife" must have been Shelley and Mary. In the letter of 1st October, moreover, Byron distinctly writes that Elise's "Shiloh story" is no doubt true. Can he have been sincere in this opinion, or was it a piece of disingenuousness to the disparagement of the much-disliked Claire, and incidentally of his friend Shelley? It does not appear to me by any means impossible that he was at the moment sincere in accepting the possibility of an intrigue between Shelley and Claire. Claire's character and moral stability he cannot have held in very high esteem ; and his bad opinion of her was greatly exasperated by the tone of her recent letters to himself. Of Shelley he might well be expected to have formed a more discriminating estimate ; but his own morals were sufficiently loose to enable him to take a not too severe view of such a circumstance as the alleged intrigue. The fact that on Shelley's arrival in Ravenna, Byron immediately revealed the whole scandal to him, in all its dis-

graceful detail, suggests the idea that he had by then learnt more than he knew of it a year previously, and that he did not accept the whole story as true.

Byron's subsequent conduct is yet more open to criticism. Mary's letter of vindication was, at his special request, entrusted to him in order that he—having, according to his own account, violated a promise of secrecy in revealing the scandal to Shelley—might observe the delicacy of himself forwarding the letter with any observation he might deem proper. After Byron's death, Mary Shelley's letter was found among his papers, and there is no evidence to show that it had ever been delivered to Hoppner. Indeed, the fact that Mary never received the letter of restored confidence which she demanded as her right from the Hoppners tends to prove that Byron—whether through culpable neglect and procrastination, or some more dishonourable cause—never sent it. Many years later, in February, 1843, Mary Shelley was in Florence. "The Hoppners are here," she then wrote to Claire. "Mrs. and Miss go to the balls. I cut her completely." This also suggests that the Hoppners remained in ignorance of the truth regarding the Shelley scandal. There yet remains, however, the *possibility* that Byron did send the letter, and that it was returned to him; an explanation which (though not very convincing in view of the Hoppners' silence) we would fain, in the absence of any certainty, accept, and thereby exonerate the poet, in whose intricate nature there were so many fine and noble elements, from the most despicable act ever laid to his charge.

Shelley wrote from Ravenna with the greatest enthusiasm concerning Byron's poetry, though they

differed more than ever in their *ideas* on the subject, and Shelley was very far from agreeing with Byron's theories. "He affects to patronize a system of criticism fit for the production of mediocrity," he wrote to Mary, "and although all his fine poems and passages have been produced in defiance of this system, yet I recognize the pernicious effects of it in the Doge of Venice; and it will cramp and limit his future efforts. . . ."

Shelley speaks of the Vth Canto of "Don Juan," which Byron read to him, as "astonishingly fine." "It sets him not only above, but far above, all the poets of the day," he wrote; "every word is stamped with immortality. . . . It fulfils, in a certain degree, what I have long preached of producing—something wholly new and relative to the age, and yet surpassingly beautiful. It may be vanity, but I think I see the trace of my earnest exhortations to him to create something wholly new."

In this same letter Shelley wrote that he despaired of rivalling Lord Byron, and there was no other with whom it was worth contending. In these words, and in his attitude throughout towards Byron, there was no taint of bitterness or envy—feelings that did not in any degree enter into Shelley's composition. But no doubt, mingled with his genuine admiration for and delight in his friend's poetry, there was a powerful sense of his own claims, and also of the injustice and blindness his genius had encountered.

On his side Byron, though too sincere and honest to attempt to deprecate Shelley's poetic genius, was not exactly the man to seek to glorify a serious rival in a field which he could generously afford to divide with Tom Moore. "If we puffed the snake,"

he confessed to Trelawny with that mixture of bantering exaggeration and sincerity which characterized his talk, "it might not turn out a profitable investment." The ungenerous sentiment which is humorously glanced at in this speech is at any rate considerably redeemed by the lack of humbug in the confession of it.

Byron did at times express his admiration of Shelley's powers. Shelley wrote that in Ravenna he had been loud in his praise of "Prometheus," but had censured "The Cenci," and had been silent on the subject of "Adonais." Shelley, perhaps with a touch of sarcasm, suggested that modesty might account for his friend's silence regarding a poem in which he was himself mentioned ; but it is more probable that Byron was dismayed, if not exactly annoyed, at being represented as mourning the death of a fellow-bard whose poetry had always aroused his wrathful and contemptuous criticism.

Byron, no doubt, better than any of Shelley's friends, understood and appreciated the value of his poetry. Peacock held it in sincerely high esteem ; but his admiration and sympathy must have been considerably limited by what, no doubt, he regarded as exaggerations and undue ebullitions of enthusiasm. Peacock, though a man of very superior intellectual powers, was, at the same time, a cold and cynical man of the world, a gourmand and a gourmet as his novels reveal him, who must have regarded humanitarian ideals with some contempt as a disease allied to vegetarianism. Leigh Hunt, on the contrary, was a political partisan in sympathy with many of Shelley's ideas, and one who appreciated his standard of morals and conduct ; but he did not feel and enjoy

the highest strains of his poetry. Hogg regarded much of it as "nonsensical rhapsody"—no doubt the "Prometheus Unbound" would come under this category—while he loved the man and the gentleman in Shelley, and revered his intellectual and reasoning powers. Tom Medwin doubtless thought that he fully appreciated his cousin's poetry, and entertained a very genuine love for it, and hero-worship for the poet ; but he had not the intellect to be the one man of his age to fully appreciate Shelley at his real worth. Edward John Trelawny, who became acquainted with Shelley shortly after his return from Ravenna, and who had so much of the poet in his own nature, came nearer to a just appreciation ; but the one man who had full opportunities to estimate him correctly was Byron.

For Shelley as a man Byron entertained the deepest admiration, respect, and liking. In his journal he refers to Moore, Scott, and Shelley, as the only literary men he liked personally—the first two as being men of the world, and Shelley as a "visionary out of it."

Byron's final estimate of Shelley, written after his death, does him justice. "There is thus another man gone," he wrote to Tom Moore, "about whom the world was ill-naturedly, and ignorantly, and brutally mistaken. It will perhaps do him justice *now*, when he can be no better for it." "I never knew [a man] who was not a beast in comparison," he wrote elsewhere. Praise could scarcely ascend higher.

The delicacy and uneasiness of his relations with Byron at this time, due to the complications of Claire Clairmont and Leigh Hunt, certainly rendered Shelley

morbidly sensitive. To Leigh Hunt he confesses in a letter of April, 1822, that he may be becoming misanthropical and suspicious. "Certain it is," he adds, "that Lord Byron has made me bitterly feel the inferiority which the world has presumed to place between us and which subsists nowhere in reality but in our own talents, which are not our own, but Nature's—or in our rank, which is not our own but Fortune's."

How far this disagreeable impression was due to any fault on Byron's part, and how far to Shelley's super-sensitiveness on Leigh Hunt's account (for, though he delicately takes it to himself, it could scarcely have been on his own), it is difficult to judge, as it always has been and remains difficult to judge, from so much contrary evidence, Byron's proper character. In general, the student of his life and works is too much dazzled, and even fascinated, by the man, by the wonderful energy and exuberance of his personality and his writings, by the good in him which overshadows the evil and by the evil which confuses the good, to judge with perfect lucidity of judgment. It is impossible to weigh Byron in the balance without being influenced by partiality or prejudice of one kind or another. To dissect him from the standpoint of commonplace morality is futile ; he completely evades the attempt. Froude said of Mr. Cordy Jeaffreson's carefully studied and laboured analysis of the poet that it was like a minute description of Vesuvius by a man who had not perceived that it was a volcano. Others are liable to be blinded and deafened somewhat by the fire and thunder of the volcano ; and it becomes difficult to describe Vesuvius.

In his relations with Byron, Shelley was always divided between admiration for the man's intellect—for Byron the poet and genius—and exasperation with his less noble aspect, with his childish waywardness, his obstinate pride, his unreasonableness, and moral perversity. But at this time there was another element in his feelings—an element foreign to his nature—which he himself perceived and deplored. His own words best analyse the situation :

"The *dæmon* of mistrust and pride lurks between two persons in our situation, poisoning the freedom of our intercourse," he wrote to Mary from Ravenna. "This is a tax, and a heavy one, which we must pay for being human. I think the fault is not on my side, nor is it likely, I being the weaker. I hope that in the next world these things will be better managed. What is passing in the heart of another, rarely escapes the observation of one who is a strict anatomist of his own."

CHAPTER XXII

CONCEPTION OF THE "LIBERAL"—PROPOSAL TO LEIGH HUNT— FIRST VISIT TO GULF OF SPEZIA

ON the 17th August, Shelley left Ravenna, notwithstanding Byron's urgent desire that he should remain longer, and returned straight to the Baths of Pisa, where Mary anxiously awaited him.

Mary's solitude—which was always an irksome ordeal to her—had been occupied in a sufficiently painful manner with the thoughts engendered by the vile calumnies of which she had learned from Shelley. To a woman almost morbidly sensitive to the good or bad opinion of others, such revelations must have been acutely distressing ; but her character was built on a sufficiently stable foundation to resist the shock. The splendid self-confidence of early youth, which had sustained her at the period of her elopement with Shelley, was already somewhat on the wane ; but Shelley's fine influence and example fortified her to withstand all unworthy attacks. He wrote to her after receiving her indignant letter to Mrs. Hoppner, sympathizing with the feelings which animated her, but saying that after the first impulse of emotion was past with him, he had “regained the indifference which the opinion of anything or anybody, except

our own consciousness, amply merits, and day by day shall more receive from me." He admits, however, in this letter, the seriousness of the situation and the practical necessity of refuting calumny.

The proximity of the Williamses proved a solace to Mary during the brief period of Shelley's absence, and Williams, who had some talent as an amateur painter, was busily employed in painting her miniature as a birthday present to her husband. Shelley was absent on that day, and Mary forwarded it to him in Ravenna. So far as I am aware, the ultimate fate of this miniature is not known.

Mary herself was hard at work copying "*Valperga*," which, after many interruptions, she had roughly finished during the summer months. It had been a labour of great industry and research, and she purposed devoting any profits accruing from it to plugging up the ever-gaping vacuum of Godwin's credit. In November, Shelley wrote offering the work to Ollier, in terms of considerable appreciation of its merits, but the silence of the publishers induced him to abandon this scheme. The novel did not indeed appear till after Shelley's death, being published in 1823 by G. and W. B. Whittaker.

Shelley's visit to Byron in Ravenna was fruitful of consequences. It decided Byron, and with him the Gamba family, in the selection of Pisa as a winter residence, and it generated the scheme of the *Liberal*, a journal devoted to advanced thought and literature, in which Byron, Shelley, and Leigh Hunt were to collaborate—a hazardous enough scheme on the face of it and destined to be fraught with disaster—though its grand possibilities might well seduce the imagination.

The idea of a journal had been for some time flitting before the mental vision of both Shelley and Byron. From a letter of Shelley's to Peacock, dated February, 1819, it would appear that even before his departure from England there had been some talk between them of Peacock's organizing a review, for Shelley writes with regret that he supposes there is no longer any hope of his doing so. "The *Quarterly* is undoubtedly conducted with talent, great talent, and affords a dreadful preponderance against the cause of improvement. If a band of staunch reformers, resolute yet skilful infidels, were united in so close and constant a league as that in which interest and fanaticism have bound the members of that literary coalition!"

Byron had more recently and more definitely been meditating on such a scheme, and on Christmas Day, 1820, he wrote to Moore that, unless a Neapolitan war intervened, he might shortly be returning to London, and proposed collaborating with the Irish bard in the production of a newspaper; an idea which his correspondent had himself proposed in 1812. "We will take an *office*," Byron wrote—"our names not announced but suspected—and, by the blessing of Providence, give the age some new lights upon policy, poesy, biography, criticism, morality, theology, and all other ism, ality, and ology whatsoever." By such a scheme Moore's debts might be paid off in a twelvemonth, and they would have some fun together "composing, correcting, supposing, inspecting," and supping together over their lucubrations. The prospect of paying off their friends' debts seems to have played a large part in the journalistic projects of both poets.

Byron never returned to London, and his plans for a review to be published in conjunction with Moore never matured : but the idea was revived during Shelley's stay in Ravenna ; and Byron then proposed that it should be carried out from Italy by himself, Shelley, and Leigh Hunt. This project was strengthened on Byron's part by his dissatisfaction early in 1822 with his publisher, John Murray, who had been considerably scared by the hue and outcry against the early cantos of "Don Juan," and by "Cain," which was so greatly admired by Shelley.

For this purpose it became necessary for Hunt to come out to Italy : and the removal of Leigh Hunt, unhappily, entailed bringing with him an invalid wife and six children. That Shelley had for some time been contemplating this emigration scheme is evident, as the only means he could devise of relieving the pecuniary and bodily distress of Hunt and his family. Leigh Hunt had been in very bad health since the autumn of 1820—so ill, in fact, that he had been forced to give up writing for the *Examiner*; and his wife early in 1821 wrote to Mary begging her to transfer them all to Italy. Mary evidently had a woman's instinctive inkling of the trouble this wholesale emigration would cause to all parties concerned, and wrote warning Marianne in the most strenuous manner of the danger of the scheme.

Shelley could not see a bemuddled or unhappy situation without trying to relieve it, by means however bold and desperate. Another man would have paled before such a project, but Shelley's courage was invincible. He must have hypnotized Byron into acquiescence, or, indeed, as it appears, initia-

tion in the proposal ; for the suggestion did come from Byron himself. So far back as 1818, indeed, Shelley's visit to Byron in Venice had the effect of stirring Byron up to offer to pay Hunt's expenses out to Italy ; but on this previous occasion Shelley mildly suggested that Mrs. and the Masters and Misses Hunt had better remain behind on their native shores. On returning now to the Baths of San Giuliano, Shelley wrote to Hunt and announced the proposal :

" He [Byron] proposes that you should come and go shares with him and me, in a periodical work, to be conducted here ; in which each of the contracting parties should publish all their original compositions, and share the profits." This, Shelley confided to Leigh Hunt, he would himself never be induced to do. Byron and Leigh Hunt had, each in his degree, "equal stocks of reputation and success" ; and Shelley had no idea of deriving pecuniary or worldly profit from publicly associating with them. He was, and desired to be, "nothing." But he would serve as the link between the noble poet and the journalist, and fulfil his usual rôle of provider of funds, as regarded Leigh Hunt's journey to Italy. He was not himself in a position to produce the necessary cash, nor was Byron the man from whom he would be willing to receive an obligation in the worldly sense of the word, either for himself or his friend. Under the circumstances, staunch, liberal Horace Smith was applied to, and generously produced the requisite amount both for meeting the expenses of the journey to Italy and for paying up Hunt's inevitable batch of outstanding debts. And Leigh Hunt, with his somewhat irresponsible,

effervescent spirits, received the suggestion with overwhelming glee, and forthwith inaugurated his muddlesome arrangements for the ill-starred journey. To Leigh Hunt and his domestic *Odyssey* we must return later.

The Leigh Hunt scheme and "Hellas" occupied Shelley's time and mind during the autumn of 1821. "Hellas" must have been the production of October, or of September and October, for on the 22nd of the latter month Shelley wrote to Gisborne that he was then just finishing it. "A sort of lyrical, dramatic, nondescript piece of business," he describes it to Horace Smith. In point of solidity it is perhaps one of Shelley's least successful poems, being somewhat unconvincing and unsubstantial, but the lyrical choruses are full of extreme beauty, and the whole poem breathes generous enthusiasm for liberty and for the Greek cause. The drama is founded to some extent on the "Persæ" of Æschylus. Greece, ancient and modern, largely filled Shelley's thoughts at this time; and, indeed, ancient Greece had always been the only school and model in art which he acknowledged. "I read the Greek dramatists and Plato for ever," he wrote.

Early in September, Shelley and Mary made a brief excursion from San Giuliano to visit the gloriously beautiful coast towards Spezia, with a view to ascertaining its merits as a possible summer resort. Claire, after a period of considerable alienation from Mary, during which they did not correspond, was now again on friendly terms with her, and joined them from Leghorn on this trip. Some delightful hours were spent sailing or rowing about the Bay in all the glory of Italian September weather.

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Spezia, with its beautiful avenue of orange-trees descending to the sea, was visited, and they revelled in the grandly impressive spectacle of the Carrara mountains in moonlight. The weather at the Baths was just breaking when they got back, but this did not prevent them from prolonging the return journey as far as Pugnano, to share the impressions of their recent wanderings with the Williamses, where Claire remained on a visit. She left them on the evening of October 30th, to return to the Bojis in Florence.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE PISA OF SHELLEY AND BYRON—ARRIVAL OF BYRON AND THE GAMBAS—TRELAWNY—THE PISAN CIRCLE—SHELLEY'S INFLUENCE ON BYRON

ON the 25th October, Shelley, Mary, and the baby returned to Pisa, where they settled in the Tre Palazzi di Chiesa, on the south side of the Arno, quite close to the Ponte alla Fortezza—the house they had been busy furnishing before leaving the Baths, on the "fruits of two years' economy," as Mary informed Mrs. Gisborne.

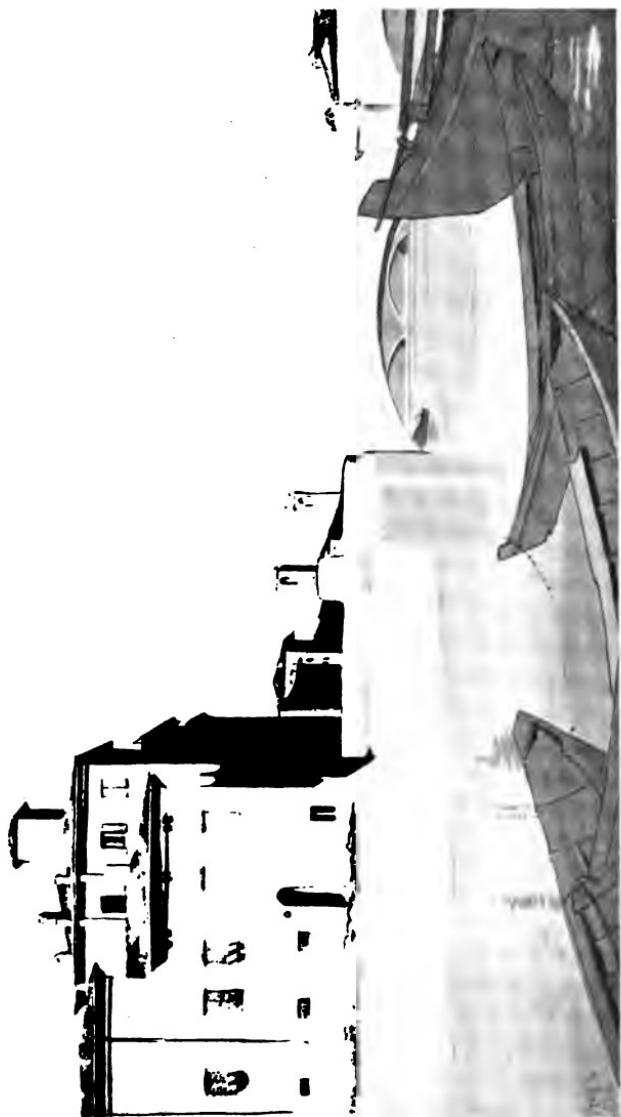
Time has dealt gently with the old city, and the Pisa of to-day is little changed from the Pisa where Shelley and Byron sojourned, though no longer the robust and animated capital of the Republic of earlier times. Pisa is a sleepy city, with all the tokens of greatness on a miniature scale ; stately palaces and villa dwellings—each with its garden of fruit-trees and flowers—churches, *piazzas*, and the immortal Camposanto, and rich cluster of monuments. Over all things is a sense of immobility ; we feel it a city which has accomplished its purpose in story, and now rests without progress or retreat : there is a suggestion of the stagnation of immortality.

Let us enter Pisa by the Porta alle Piagge, from the road along which Shelley and Byron and

their little company of horsemen were wont to return daily from pistol practice in the grounds of the Villa la Podera at Cisanello to their homes on the Lung' Arno. The shady Passeggiata delle Piagge did not then exist, and the party must have entered the town by the country road that leads direct to the Villa. Here on our left, across the Ponte alla Fortezza, is the Tre Palazzi di Chiesa—so called from its triptychal form and from the surname Chiesa of the original owner—the last house in which Shelley dwelt in Pisa. A little farther along, on the north, and more fashionable, side, stands the fine sixteenth-century Palazzo Lanfranchi, with its antique out-jutting roof, since curtailed, and modernized façade, on which marble replaces the ancient stone. The original façade of this palace is attributed to Michelangelo. Byron was evidently mistaken in telling Murray that the Palazzo Lanfranchi was "a famous old feudal palace." The dungeons and cells to which he complacently referred are merely basement apartments, which have sunk underground through the gradual rise of the Arno. An old servant of Byron's related to Sig. Felice Tribolati that the poet found a grim satisfaction in descending to these underground halls on stormy nights, and that he would order cushions to be brought down to him in order that he might sleep there.¹ Shelley engaged the Palazzo Lanfranchi for his friend in August, 1821, in compliance with Byron's urgent request to procure him a handsome and commodious dwelling in Pisa. He rented it from Dr. Vaccà, who had purchased the palace a year earlier, on the death of the previous owner, Signora Felichi.

¹ Felice Tribolati—"Saggi Critici e Biografici."

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Farther along, past the Ponte di Mezzo, we pass the Grand Hotel, the former Albergo delle Tre Donzelle, and come to the Casa Galletti, now a hospital by bequest of the last member of the ancient Galletti family. The Casa Galletti, which is of very modest aspect, is noteworthy because it is built into an ancient gate of mediæval Pisa ; it contains a small church known as the Madonna dei Galletti. Then follow the Palazzo "*alla Giornata*," and beyond this the fine old Palazzo Aulla, where Shelley briefly resided, and the Casa Frassi, where he also dwelt for a span. And Nature, more enduring than the brick and marble-built edifices of man, still suffuses the city in a golden haze of light, and gives us the wonderful sunsets, making the river glow "as with fire," which were the delight of Shelley.

Teresa Guiccioli and her father and brother arrived in Pisa towards the end of August, and here the beautiful Ravennese, during fully two months, awaited with what patience she could command the arrival of her lover. "The Countess G[uiccioli] is very patient," Shelley wrote him on the 21st October, "though sometimes she seems apprehensive that you will *never* leave Ravenna." He regrets that ill-health—a tertian fever and his "habitual disorder"—had prevented him from showing the lady the attentions he otherwise would. The old Count, a simple country gentleman, devoted to his native country and to his native town, pined in exile, and was melancholy and taciturn. His daughter devoted much of her time in Pisa to comforting and alleviating his gloom.

In the early hours of the 28th October, Lord Byron left Ravenna. He set out in considerable state, with his usual retinue of servants and satel-

lites, menagerie of miscellaneous beasts, horses, and carriages : a formidable vanguard of these, however, and all his domestic goods and chattels, had set out in advance. Byron's moves must have been momentous undertakings, for he was of an accumulative turn, disinclined to part with anything that had once formed part of his life or surroundings. His personal belongings were numerous and heterogeneous, and week after week he wrote from Ravenna that they were in process of being packed. His retinue went on increasing in the same manner as his chattels. The Consul Hoppner and Teresa Guiccioli tell how he could never make up his mind to dismiss servants even for gross misconduct, nor did he discourage the presence of their children and families. The original Fletcher, his lifelong servitor imported from England, gradually developed into the nucleus of a kind of bodyguard, defensive and offensive, recruited from Venice and the Romagna, among whom Tita, the ferocious-looking gondolier (who, according to Shelley, had stabbed several people and was the most good-natured fellow in the world), was his most faithful and devoted soldier. Byron was himself wont to speak jocularly and with some pride of the unruly nature of his followers, who were devoted to his defence and service, but somewhat turbulent among themselves, and the cause of considerable uneasiness and suspicion to the authorities.

Byron's advent caused a commotion all over Pisa. The thinking Italians, the men of thought and letters no less than police authorities and spies, were interested in his advent. All were anxious to get a glimpse of the great and much debated English-

man, about whom the most amazing and extravagant stories were afloat.

"It was rumoured at this time," wrote F. D. Guerrazzi, the novelist, "that an astounding man had arrived in Pisa, one of whom people were wont to speak in a thousand different ways, all contradictory and many absurd. He was said to be of royal blood ; a man of great wealth, of sanguinary temperament and savage customs ; a past-master in all gentlemanly accomplishments ; a genius of evil, but of more than human intellect. . . ."

En route to Pisa, Byron fell in with the poet Samuel Rogers, at Bologna, whence they set out, every window of the Inn of San Marco open to watch the departure of the noble bard and his retinue—and crossed the Apennines together.

Byron arrived in Pisa on the 1st November, and took up his residence in the *piano nobile* of the Lanfranchi Palace. Three days later the Williamses returned from Pugnano, and settled on the lower floor of the Tre Palazzi, where they became the immediate neighbours and ever constant companions of Shelley and Mary. On the 5th Shelley took his friend to call on Byron ; and Williams was delighted with the noble poet's unaffected and gentlemanly ease and his good-humour, with which "the elegance of his language and the brilliance of his wit cannot fail to inspire those who are near him." On the 14th Medwin, on his return from Geneva, arrived in Pisa.

During these latter months of Shelley's and his own life, Williams's diary (which has never been published *in extenso*) gives a simple and faithful, if not very ample, account of the doings, the occupa-

tions and preoccupations, the meetings, and rides, and strifes, the work and interests of the Pisan circle.

At Shelley's suggestion, Williams set to work to assist him in the continuation of his translation of Spinoza ; "that is to say, I write while he dictates," Williams modestly adds ; and Shelley, so far as circumstances permitted, persevered in his usual frugal and studious course of life. Byron, during his residence in Pisa, continued his habits of rising late and dawdling through the day, chatting with his friends when they called, playing at billiards, riding, and shooting, passing some hours with Teresa Guiccioli, and then devoting his nights, till a very advanced hour, to composition ; "Werner," "The Deformed Transformed," and the VIth Canto of "Don Juan" were the products of these months in Pisa. Mary Shelley, Jane Williams, and the Countess Guiccioli were constantly together, and rode, walked, and chatted when their husbands were not with them. Interest in Greek politics was as rife as ever ; and Williams mentions Prince Argiropoli calling on the 11th November to announce the taking of Tripolizza by the Greeks, and Shelley's accompanying him to Lord Byron's house the day following.

Williams himself had been busily engaged during the summer months of 1821 in a dramatic venture — "The Promise, or a Year, a Month, and a Day" ; a drama founded on two stories of Boccaccio, for which Shelley wrote the beautiful "Epithalamium" given by Medwin. The drama was refused by Covent Garden Theatre as unsuitable for representation. On the 10th January he consulted with the learned Taafe on the life of Popes Celestine V and Boniface VIII, and on the following day commenced

a tragedy on this subject. Shelley followed his work with the most friendly interest, and encouraged him in hopes of success. The tragedy was not without merit to judge from the testimony of Shelley, Trelawny, and others ; and Byron heard so much good of it that he generously offered to write for it a "prologue and epilogue, and thus ensure its reading and success if it possess the least merit as a drama." Shelley's genius was of the infectious and magnetic kind which spreads around it an atmosphere of poetic ideal and aspiration : all those who gathered round him were encouraged and urged on by his enthusiasm and generous support and interest—above all by his magnetic influence.

The arrival of Edward John Trelawny on the 14th January, 1822, completed the memorable circle. "At Pisa we were all under thirty except Byron," he wrote in his old age, recalling those days, which shone out from a distance of nearly eighty years of adventure and travel, passion and thought and fight, as the most luminous and the most deeply interesting. "Such hearts as ours," he exclaims to a companion of those never-to-be-forgotten days, "united under the sunny clime of Italy, such scenes and events no time can fade ; their glowing colours can never be dimmed. To try even to forget them is as vain as to expect their return."

Edward John Trelawny was the son of a country gentleman and retired army officer, belonging to an old Cornish family. He was born in November, 1792, thus being Shelley's junior by a few months. He was a man of extraordinarily handsome and vigorous presence, tall and dark, of almost Moorish aspect : a man of action and adventure who had

led something of the life of a buccaneer and a free-booter. Trelawny was the born enemy of all restriction and convention—one of those rare men whose innate excellence of heart and natural store of chivalry and honour find the compulsory restrictions of civilized and family life intolerably galling. He was precisely the man to fall under the spell of Shelley's genius. His highly interesting romance, "The Adventures of a Younger Son," gives a lively and vigorous picture of the man. The book is largely, even in detail, autobiographical.

On the surface the contrast between Shelley and Trelawny is striking, and strange their mutual liking and sympathy. And yet, looking deeper down, we discover much that there was in common between the outwardly rough, weather-beaten, dare-devil Cornishman and the delicate, super-sensitive poet. Both had an intense love of liberty and an equally intense hatred of all restriction, tyranny, and cruelty; and the poet was as fearless as the buccaneer, and the buccaneer in his heart was a poet. Intensely emotional, passionate, and imaginative, Trelawny shared Shelley's constancy in essentials and his obvious inconstancy on the surface. He vented his feelings to and anent his friends with an equal disregard for the exigencies of moderation and strict consistency. Shelley's penetrating estimate of an old friend is singularly applicable to himself and also to Trelawny. "It was hardly possible," he wrote, "for a person of the extreme subtlety and delicacy of Mrs. Boinville's understanding and affections to be quite sincere and constant."

In the good old days when boys were considered as flogging-blocks for the castigation of original sin,

Trelawny had revolted with a boy's violence against the cruelty and heartless tyranny of home and school : he was finally expelled from his home, outcast from his family, and shipped abroad, for handing a pigeon-pie from his father's well-stocked larder to a starving old woman. The poet, of gentler and more delicate nature, had his father's door closed against him for moral insubordination. He was "hooted out of the country for questioning a dogma," as Byron said.

Trelawny, like Medwin and Williams, came to Pisa mainly for the purpose of seeing Shelley. He intended passing the winter with his friend Captain Roberts of the Royal Navy, shooting in the wildest part of the Maremma, and spending the ensuing summer with Shelley and Byron boating in the Mediterranean. A letter from Williams in December had informed him of his and Shelley's boating projects, and their desire that Roberts might build them a barque for this purpose—the first reference to the fatal boat that was to have such tragic consequences.

Byron was, naturally enough, the centre of the social circle in Pisa, which included the Shelleys, Trelawny, the Williamses, the Gamba family, Medwin, Taafe, and Captain Hay—"a Maremma hunter," as Dowden briefly describes him, and apparently a former friend of Byron's. Byron's dinners became famous in Pisa, though he himself was most sparing in his diet, from motives of health and the fear of growing fat ; while Shelley, who was frequently one of the convives, still adhered, more or less strictly, to his meagre vegetarian diet. Trelawny also, no doubt, was no Epicurean ; in his later years he became the inveterate enemy of all gorging, gormandizing, "beer-swilling," and

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similar self-indulgence. Yet Shelley complained that his nerves were harassed by sitting up till three in the morning watching the others making themselves vats of claret.

Byron's brilliant and often bitter wit, and Shelley's eloquence and learning, combined to immortalize these feasts. From time to time one or other of Byron's old friends came to Pisa and took a place at his board. Samuel Rogers was there in April, 1821. Trelawny recounts how these worthies, though freethinkers in their hearts, hypocritically held aloof from the infidel Shelley, against whose snares they constantly warned Byron, and treated him with a certain air of contempt, which he deigned not to perceive. Shelley would at such times sit alone and full of thought, always serene and unperturbed—"as true a gentleman as ever stepped across a drawing-room," as Byron described him—till, his erudition or knowledge being called upon, he would take his part in the conversation, and then outshine all the convives.

Byron's friends at home were very apprehensive regarding Shelley's influence on him. The degree of animus, and alarm, and solicitude for the morals and principles of the virtuous lord which his friendship with Shelley, and the "unholy alliance" with Shelley and Leigh Hunt, aroused in English literary circles is something almost beyond belief. Moore wrote repeatedly warning Byron against the snares of the Snake (as Byron playfully christened his fellow-poet). He knows not which he hates most, Moore declares in one letter, the bold, damning bigot or the bold, annihilating infidel. . . . "You will easily guess that in all this, I am thinking, not so

much of you, as of a friend, and, at present, companion of yours, whose influence over your mind . . . I own I deprecate and dread most earnestly."

But poor Moore's anxieties and alarms and his hatred of "bold, annihilating infidels" are as nothing compared to the wrath and horror called forth on other hands by Byron's association with Shelley. Dr. John Watkins, in an anonymous publication of 1822 concerning Byron and the Pisa circle, refers to the matter with raised hands and eyes. After re-dishing the old story of Shelley's inscription of *atheos* in the album at Chamouny, he proceeds :

" Yet Lord Byron continued to live on terms of intimacy with this person, after witnessing the atrocity which he committed ; and he is actually associated with him at the present moment, in some new literary projects in Italy."

Shelley's influence, which was so much dreaded by Moore and the London coteries, did not make an absolute infidel of Byron, who, indeed, appeared to Shelley "little better than a Christian," but it can be seen very clearly from Byron's letters and conversations of this period that Shelley did exercise a considerable influence over his mind and outlook.

In talking with Trelawny, Byron flippantly declared that he wrote for the "groundlings," he would write for men after he was forty ;¹ but at the same time we find him writing in the following strain to his publisher :

" As to 'a poem in the old way, to interest the women' as you call it, I shall attempt of that kind nothing further. I follow the bias of my own mind,

* Richard Edgecumbe : "Conversations with Trelawny."

without considering whether women or men are or are not to be pleased."

Shelley could scarcely have expressed himself differently.

And in a letter to Moore on the 4th March, 1822, we see with equal force the Shelley influence :

" . . . I think it [society] as now constituted, fatal to all great original undertakings of every kind. I never courted it *then*, when I was young and high in blood, and one of its 'curled darlings'; and do you think I would do so *now*, when I am living in a clearer atmosphere? "

Byron might have expressed something akin to this sentiment apart from the influence of Shelley : but it would have been differently expressed ; with scorn and mockery—"a mixture of wormwood and verdigris"—not in this simple and elevated spirit. Byron would have spoken as a cynic wearied by the embraces of the world ; not as a philosopher, distantly regarding and renouncing it.

Trelawny wrote that "in Pisa in 1822 Lord Byron talked vehemently of our getting up a play in his great hall at the Lanfranchi. It was to be 'Othello.' He cast the characters thus : Byron—Iago ; Trelawny—Othello ; Williams—Cassio ; Medwin—Roderigo ; Mrs. Shelley—Desdemona ; Mrs. Williams—Emilia. 'Who is to be our audience?' I asked. 'All Pisa,' he rejoined. He recited a great portion of his part with great gusto. It exactly suited him : he looked it too."

In writing to Trelawny some years after Shelley's death, Mary recalled, with the sad pleasure there is in such memories, this theatrical project. "Do you remember when, delivering the killing scene,

you awoke Jane as Othello awakens Desdemona, from her sleep on the sofa? . . . I wish we had seen it represented as was talked of at Pisa. Iago would never have found a better representative than that strange and wondrous creature, whom one regrets daily more—for who here can equal him?"¹

Medwin, in his "Conversations," expresses the belief that Byron would have made the finest actor in the world; "his voice has a flexibility, a variety in its tones, a power, and a pathos beyond any I ever heard, and his countenance was capable of expressing the tenderest, as well as the strongest emotions." A difficulty over Desdemona arose, however, and the Guiccioli put her veto on the theatricals. Williams gives the 18th and 28th February as the dates of Byron's suggestion, and the abandonment, of this highly interesting project. Williams, who had not a great faith in Byron's constancy to any plans or place, laid a wager with Shelley on the 18th that Byron would quit Italy before six months. "Odds against me," he adds.²

While on the subject of wagers, it may be mentioned that it was in Byron's house, just before going in to dinner on Christmas Day, 1821, that Byron made the thousand-pound bet with Shelley regarding the relative longevity of Lady Noel and Sir Timothy, which poor Medwin—among other injustices which fell to his lot—has been accused of inventing. In Williams's diary I find the following entry in confirmation: "Dec. 25: It was on this day [Christmas] that Lord Byron and Shelley proposed to give a

¹ Letter of Mary Shelley to Trelawny (February 27, 1825?) and Trelawny's note thereto, in the possession of Mrs. Call.

² Williams's Diary.

thousand pounds to the other who first came into their estate." On the following 15th of February Williams enters : " Heard of the death of Lady Noel, and that Lord Byron consequently comes into an estate of 10,000 a year. Mem. on this subject. See Christmas day."

Byron never did pay up his bet, and Williams no doubt was aware of this, and duly disgusted : but his diary shows that Medwin was wrong in stating that he never entered Byron's house again—though he may possibly have made up his mind to follow this course on definitely concluding that Byron did not intend to pay.

When not with Byron, the Shelleys and Williamses generally dined together on the upper or lower floor of the Tre Palazzi, where they had their homes. About three in the afternoon the friends would meet at the Palazzo Lanfranchi, where Byron's horses awaited them, and repair thence to the Villa la Podera, an extensive enclosure attached to a picturesque farmhouse—part garden, part farm, part vineyard—situated in Cisanello, some two miles outside Pisa beyond the Porta alle Piagge, where they practised pistol-shooting at a target. Medwin quotes an amusing description of Shelley in this connection :

" His ordinary preparations for a rural walk formed a remarkable contrast with his mild aspect and pacific habits. He provided himself with a pair of duelling pistols, a good store of powder and ball, and when he came to a solitary spot, he pinned a card, or fixed some other mark upon a tree or a bank, and amused himself by firing at it. He was a pretty good shot, and was much delighted

LANDSCAPE OUTSIDE PESA





at his success." In accuracy of aim he was only second to Byron.

When Byron first visited Pisa he applied to the Governor, Marchese Viviani, for permission to practise shooting in the garden of the Lanfranchi Palace ; but the answer came that it was "against the law," and that the Governor regretted that, having refused similar permission to other distinguished visitors, he could not make an exception in favour of his lordship. In connexion with this pistol practice, Medwin says that Shelley and Byron had invented a droll sort of "macaronic language"—they called firing, *tiring*; hitting, *colping*; missing, *mancating*; riding, *cavalling*; walking, *a-spassing*, etc.

It was probably through the good offices of Dr. Vaccà that Byron obtained permission to practise with his "pistol-club" among the vines and fruit-trees in the grounds of the Villa la Podera, which then belonged to the Castinelli family, Vaccà's friends. Byron found a further attraction to the Villa in the person of a beautiful peasant-girl, Maria by name, to whose charms, according to local tradition, he was not insensible. A sketch of this girl, a pretty brunette, who had the distinction of being Byron's last recorded flame, is preserved in Pisa. It was made in 1822 by Paolo Folini, relative and heir of the Castinellis.

CHAPTER XXIV

SHELLEY'S FEELINGS TOWARDS BYRON—HIS INCURABLE LONELINESS—THE MASI AFFRAY

In this milieu, for a time, Shelley found intellectual sympathy and moral solace. His health improved ; his spirits were less downcast. He felt the fascination of Byron's genius and personality, though it was a fascination that did not rouse him or stimulate him to production. It had, on the contrary, a paralysing effect on him. In his letters and conversations Shelley frequently referred to this feeling. It was apparent in Ravenna ; it became more distinct at Pisa. In May, 1822, he thus strongly and picturesquely expresses the sentiment to Horace Smith : "I do not write ; I have lived too long near Lord Byron, and the sun has extinguished the glow-worm."

Though early in 1822 he was still working on "Charles I" and later on the "Triumph of Life"—both unfinished—he was passing through a period of considerable and unwonted discouragement, while his powers were unabated and preparing for fresh flights.

Mary was happier than she had been for years ; free from Claire, and in agreeable intimacy with

the Williamses, generally well in health, and surrounded by the society of brilliant, interesting and agreeable people. At times even she made excursions into society outside the Shelleyan circle, as when Trelawny accompanied her to a party at the fashionable Mrs. Beauclerc's ; at another time she essayed the innovation of attending Dr. Nott's English Church service, but desisted from her visits when that worthy pointedly preached against atheists.

But while Mary required society—with its changes and oblivious—to keep her spirits from melancholy despondency, Shelley shrank from its contagion like a sensitive plant. Indeed, he was aristocratically fastidious and exclusive in his tastes—far more so than Byron, who, while withdrawing from the many, yet encouraged flatterers and sycophants, and loved notoriety. Shelley's terror, as described by Trelawny, was pathetic, when threatened by Mary with a musical evening in honour of the famous English tenor Sinclair, then in Pisa ; and again when Mary announced the approach of *la Aziola*—"nothing but a little downy owl"—but whose name for the moment filled Shelley with apprehensions of a human female intruder. After the revulsion of disgust which Shelley experienced on learning from Byron of the calumnies which were current against him, he longed to retire, with Mary and the baby, to a solitary island in the sea, and close against his retreat the flood-gates of the world. On the 11th December he wrote to Claire :

"The Exotic, as you are pleased to call me, droops in this frost—a frost both moral and physical—a solitude of the heart. . . . I cannot endure the company of many persons, and the society of one

is either great pleasure or great pain. . . . I am employed in nothing. I read—but I have no spirits for serious composition. I have no confidence, and to write in solitude or put forth thoughts without sympathy is unprofitable vanity."

It was one of the penalties of Shelley's genius that despite his warm and genial disposition, and the real sympathy and affection he nurtured for his wife and friends, he should often feel a sense of isolation and despondency in their midst. Genius, which has the power to soar so high above the ordinary interests and the denizens of this terrestrial globe, is often lonely in the untrodden heights.

The stanzas addressed to Edward Williams, beginning

"The Serpent is shut out from Paradise,"

which Shelley handed to his friend on the 26th January, 1822, lift the veil a little on the poet's inner life at this time. They are painfully reminiscent of the stanzas written in 1814 when he was compelled to leave the genial surroundings of Madame de Boinville's home for his own "desolated hearth" and the withered embrace of the alienated Harriet. The situation glanced at, the feelings revealed, the very language chosen to express these, bear an unmistakable stamp of similarity. The illusions of love and domestic happiness, so fondly grasped at by all—so obstinately protracted by most—were failing him; for the poet's intensely keen susceptibility to all impressions and sensations from within and without cut him off from the merciful solace of apathetic self-deception.

Yet Shelley, in so far as he could belong to any

one woman, was fortunate enough in his wife, a woman of uncommon intellect, courage, and philosophic endurance. But the marriage tie, or any other tie which society has ordained for the control of its millions, was certainly not framed with a view to the exceptional requirements of its exceptional units, its men of genius and its poets. How could one woman, with all her beauty and all her intellect, fill the heart of this eager, universal lover and singer of beauty, visible and intellectual? It was futile, and perhaps selfish, but certainly human, on Mary's part to grudge her husband the happiness she could not alone bestow on him.

Meanwhile the course of daily life in Pisa was almost monotonous in its regularity. In December an incident of an unwonted kind ruffled for a moment the serenity of the English circle. Williams thus refers to it in his diary for the 12th December :

" Shelley calls and tells us of having heard that a man was to be burnt alive at Lucca for sacrilege. He proposes that Lord B[ryon] and a party of English shall enter the town and rescue the man by force. L[ord] B[ryon] objects, but wishes to draw up a memorial to the Grand Duke of Tuscany to interfere. On hearing, however, that the execution is not to take place to-morrow Taafe sets off for Luccā to make enquiries into the truth of the circumstances. S. and M. sit up with Lord B. till two o'clock."

This affair, which caused so much apprehension to the priest-hating Shelley and his friends, ended in the offender (a priest) being sent to the galleys, and the excitement blew over.

On the 9th March, Thomas Medwin left for Rome,

unconsciously bidding adieu to his cousin for the last time. We cannot dismiss Tom Medwin—for all his conceit and occasional absurdity—without a certain sense of regret. He was a faithful friend to Shelley ; and without his biography we should know less of the poet than we do, and perhaps love him less. Much opportunity is missed in it, no doubt, but of few personal biographies can it be said otherwise. All his friends were a little inclined to laugh at Medwin, who had something simple and gullible in his nature. According to Douglas Kinnaird, Captain Hay—himself a “dull, matter-of-fact man” by Kinnaird’s account—was later on wont to speak of Medwin as a “perfect idiot”; Shelley and Mary voted him dull, and Trelawny had a poor opinion of his moral worth. Judging by the only portrait known of him, he appears an honest and kindly man, not brilliant certainly, but not lacking in good sense, and capable of devotion. During his residence in Pisa and his intimacy with Byron, he was busy taking down some of the noble bard’s somewhat thoughtless conversations, which produced the notorious volume which has been abused far beyond its demerits. Of his later career, after the dissolution of the Pisan circle, not much is known beyond the fact that, not many years later, c. 1824 or 1825, he married a certain Baroness Hamilton, probably of Austrian nationality, by whom two daughters were born to him, and that shortly after their birth “Captain Medwin having got deeply into debt, ran away, and was never seen or heard of again.”¹ Medwin lived to

¹ See *Westminster Review*, 1876. Trelawny confirmed this account in conversation with Mr. Rossetti. He stated that Medwin had treated his wife very badly—first dissipated all her money and then abandoned her.

an advanced age, and Trelawny, who saw something of him in his later years, described him as staunch to the end in his enthusiasm for Shelley.

Not long after Medwin's departure from Pisa, on the 24th March, occurred the much talked of affray with Sergeant-Major Stefano Masi.

The circumstances were briefly these. Byron was returning towards the Porta alle Piagge with his "pistol-club"—Shelley, Trelawny, Pietro Gamba, Captain Hay, and Taafe—on horseback, Mary Shelley and Teresa Guiccioli following behind in a carriage, when Masi, hurrying into Pisa on an important official mission, unceremoniously rode through the group, which was encumbering the road, jostling against Taafe's horse as he passed. Taafe took this amiss, and called on his friends for redress, upon which they galloped after the sergeant, determined to bring him to account. They came up with him at the gate, Shelley on the swiftest horse arriving first, where the sergeant called upon the soldiers to arrest the party. This they resisted; Byron and young Gamba dashed through the guard and rode into Pisa; Shelley received a blow on his head and fell from his horse, and Captain Hay, in trying to ward it off, received a severe sabre wound on his face. After this the sergeant, recalling the urgency of his mission, ordered the soldiers to let the Englishmen pass, and himself galloped off into town. When he had arrived quite close to the Palazzo Lanfranchi, he met Byron returning on horseback, who, stopping his progress, demanded his name and handed him his card. This card, crumpled and soiled from falling in the roadway, is still preserved in Pisa.

A crowd meanwhile began to collect, and two of

Byron's satellites rushed out from the palace, armed in rude fashion : one of these (probably Byron's coachman, but this was not proved at the time) plunged a pitchfork, or other pointed instrument, into the unfortunate fellow's stomach.

Francesco Domenico Guerrazzi, then a young student in Pisa, who happened to be present at the scene, gave, many years later, the following dramatic account of it :

" I saw Masi, reeling in his saddle, ride on as far as the Café of Don Beppe ; at this point he could no longer keep his seat, his cap fell, his hair stood on end, and his face was as white as death : he tumbled to the ground, exclaiming, ' I am killed ! ' These words I myself heard ; and I still recall his terrible face, rendered yet more fearful by the contrast with his flaming red hair.

" Lifted from the ground with immense care by the students, and nursed with equal devotion, his life was saved ; but he was never the same man afterwards. He was pensioned off, and I recognized him later in the Piazza di Ponte, where he kept a little liquor and tobacco shop. He told me that Byron had sent his own doctor to him in the hospital, in token of his regret for the incident, and for the purpose of offering him money. He refused everything, however, replying that his sovereign provided for his needs—which was, to a meagre extent, true."

Guerrazzi, an ardent and proud Italian patriot, no less than a passionate admirer of Lord Byron, was an impartial witness.¹

¹ "L. T." an Austrian spy, author of a very curious diary preserved in the Archives of the Pretura at Pisa ("Arcana politicæ anticarbonarie"), gives a rather different account of the affray on

He further recounts :

" I also saw—and the impression it made on me is lasting—all the English residents in Pisa, whether or no friends of Byron, gather armed outside his palace, prepared to defend their great national poet ; and then, and later, I reflected that had he been Italian, Italians would have assembled to stone him. And then it was I began to understand why the English are a great nation, and the Italians a bundle of old rags in the corner of a rag and bone shop—at all events *up to the present.*"

Both Mary Shelley and the diarist speak of the Pisans raising their hats to the Englishmen as they passed, after the affray, and the diarist declares that Byron propitiated the populace by distributing charity outside the Palazzo Lanfranchi.

The noise this incident made in Pisa, and not in Pisa alone, can be imagined. Rumour followed rumour in wild profusion of detail and circumstance. Williams tells that on the day of the affray a report was circulated in Pisa that " a party of peasants had risen in insurrection, made an attack upon the guard, headed by some Englishmen, that the guard maintained their ground manfully against an awful number of armed insurgents, that they were at length defeated—one Englishman, whose name was Trelawny, left dead at the gate, and Lord Byron mortally wounded, who is now telling me the tale—and T[relawny] drinking brandy and water by his side." " S[helley] and T[relawny] think it necessary to go armed," wrote Williams. " A skate strap is there-

the Lung' Arno outside the Lanfranchi Palace—more to the discredit of the English—but his account is evidently not immune from political animus.

fore substituted for a pistol belt, and my pistol so slung to T[relawny]'s waist."¹ It was reported in Rome that Lord Byron had been arrested. On the 20th April, Williams writes again in his diary : "It is singular enough that suspicion should fall on me as murderer." Taafe was under like suspicion, and supposed to be in Lord Byron's palace, guarded by bulldogs.

On the evening of the affray the English party sallied forth again to the Pretura, in order to be the first to accuse, and, according to the Italian policy of the day, not wait to be accused. Three days later two of Byron's servants, of whom Gian Battista Falcieri (Tita), was one, were arrested, and shortly after one of the Countess's servants followed them. Tita, who was innocent of any misdeed in this connection, would probably never have been arrested had he not gone to make his deposition armed with a stiletto and a brace of pistols. The spirit of Byron's servants is shown by an incident reported by Williams in his diary. During the examination of Byron's courier, he was asked whether he struck the dragoon. "No," he answered, "but if I had had a pistol I should have shot him."

The reports of the wounded sergeant's health were at first highly alarming, but on the 7th April Williams reports that Trelawny thought he saw him out, leaning on the arms of two men, and on the 18th he enters : "The dragoon is recovering fast, but swears to be revenged when he gets on his legs again." Shelley's opinion, according to Williams,

¹ Many of these initials, such as T. and S., have, I feel sure, been misread and misprinted in the published edition of Williams's diary.

was that, on recovery, the wounded dragoon would demand the satisfaction of a gentleman, and Williams adds that some of "the most respectable Italians think that it ought not to be refused to him." It may here be mentioned that the unfortunate Masi, whom Byron contemptuously refers to as the son of a washerwoman (which he may have been), had fought in Spain, Germany, and Naples under the French, and as a Tuscan soldier on the restoration of Prince Ferdinand ; he had received several wounds during his campaign, and been awarded the Medal of Honour and that of St. Helena. He died in 1858, in Pisa.

Much time was taken up undergoing examinations, making depositions, and going through all the innumerable evolutions which Italian law seems to interpose between crime and punishment, for the immediate annoyance of all parties concerned and the ultimate safety of the miscreant. Ultimately Tita and his companions were released.

Taafe's conduct in this matter was open to much criticism : he was the first to create a factitious excitement about the sergeant, and apparently the last to come forward—or indeed the one to hold back definitely—in the fray which ensued. Jane Williams happily hit off the situation by christening him False-Taafe. Williams was finally requested by Lord Byron and the party, in view of certain information received and reported by Trelawny concerning the gentleman's conduct, "to wait on Taafe, and make certain inquiries of him. This was done rather to the satisfaction of the party," Williams writes, "Taafe having exculpated himself from most of the charges."

With the exception, perhaps, of Shelley, who seems to have been genuinely convinced that Masi intended deliberate insult to the party, and consequently was to blame for the whole affray—the others must have been more than half conscious that they were in the wrong. Trelawny ultimately admitted that the officer was not to blame for pushing forward and not allowing himself to be impeded in the execution of his duties by a band of civilians ; Williams viewed the matter with impartial fairness, while Vaccà and other reasonable Italians viewed the whole affair with marked disapproval. When the proceedings against his servants failed, Byron was in favour of prosecuting Masi for assault, etc. ; Shelley was little inclined for this action, and it appears that he and the barrister Collini succeeded in dissuading Byron from a course which would have appeared unfair and ungenerous.

This disturbance, and a later shindy between Byron's servants at Montenero, were responsible for the ultimate banishment of the Gambas from Tuscany—a banishment which Byron voluntarily shared.

In writing to Medwin on the 12th April, in lieu of Shelley, who was "a very bad correspondent," Mary gives a brief account of the affair, of which she declares herself "heartily tired." "It flooded us at first," she adds, "but the tide has now made its reflux, leaving the shingle of the mind as dry as ever, with the exception of some anxiety on the score of the two prisoners."

In this same letter she briefly sums up the gossip of Pisa as follows :

" You have of course heard that Mrs. Beauclerc has removed to Florence ; Pisa is fast emptying of

strangers. Lord Byron will, I believe, pass the summer in the vicinity of Livorno ; but in all probability the Williamses and we shall be at La Spezia. During the last week we have suffered greatly from the cold ; winter returned upon us, doubly disagreeable from our having fostered the agreeable hope that we had said a last *rivederla*. The country is, however, quite green, the blossoms are fading from the fruit-trees, and if the wind changes we shall feel summer at last.

" Shelley has received 'Hellas' from England ; it is well printed and with not many faults. Lord Byron seems pleased with it. His lordship has had out from England a volume of poems entitled "Dramas of the Ancient World"—and by a strange coincidence, the author (one David Lindsey) has chosen three subjects treated by Lord Byron : Cain, the Deluge, and Sardanapalus. The two first are treated quite differently. Cain begins *after* the death of Abel, and is entitled, 'The Destiny and Death of Cain.' I mention them because they are works of considerable talent, and strength of poetry and expression, although, of course, in comparison with Lord Byron as unlike as Short Life and Immortality. This is all the literary news I have for you."'

¹ Letter from Mary Shelley to Medwin in the possession of Mrs. Call.

CHAPTER XXV

SHELLEY'S BOAT—EXPEDITIONS ALONG THE GULF OF SPEZIA— DEATH OF ALLEGRA—DEPARTURE FOR LERICI

In the midst of these friendships and feuds Shelley longed for the sea—the sea and a boat of his own to sail in. The little flat-bottomed boat in which he and Williams so constantly navigated the waters of the Arno was meanwhile in constant requisition. Day by day, when the weather permitted, they sailed in her down the Arno, sometimes as far as Leghorn ; and Trelawny, or Mary and Jane, were frequently of the party. On the 14th March, while Shelley and Williams were sailing down the river, the boat was stopped and seized by the Customs officials, but on application to the Minister of Police by Shelley it was ordered to be immediately returned.

But the friends longed for a larger craft and a wider field of operations. "Have a boat we must," Williams wrote to Trelawny in December, "and if we can get Roberts to build her so much the better." The day after Trelawny's arrival in Pisa he called on Williams with the model of an American schooner, and it was settled he should write to his friend Captain Roberts, at Genoa, requesting him im-



CASTLE OF LERICI (GULF OF SPEZIA)

mediately to have a boat, forty feet long, built for them. Byron on the day following decided to have a larger boat built for himself by Roberts, and to enter into competition with his friends.

Trelawny recounts how one evening, being fond of giving Shelley glimpses of rough sea life which were not much to the poet's taste, he bore him off to the port of Leghorn, and visited with him a Greek bombard and an American clipper. The scene on board the Greek boat put Shelley in mind of Hell rather than Hellas, but he was better impressed with the Yankee ship, and wrote some verses in praise of Washington in the ship's log. Driving home with Trelawny he was in high glee, after these distractions, and "regretted having wasted his life in Greek and Latin, instead of learning the useful arts of swimming and sailoring." Trelawny, on this occasion, proposed the formation of a colony in the Gulf of Spezia, which Byron too might join—a scheme which delighted Shelley, and to which Byron eagerly adhered next day.

Accordingly, on the 7th February, Shelley and Williams set off in a calèche for Spezia on a quest for houses, and drove by Massa through the gloriously romantic scenery along the bay—scenery where the rival splendours of mountain, river, and sea strive for mastery; on the 8th they crossed the Magra near Sarzana, and arrived at Spezia at three. For three days they reconnoitred between Spezia and Sarzana, looking for a suitable house for themselves, and one spacious enough for Lord Byron and his suite, a certain Signor Luciardi, to whom Vaccà had given them an introduction, rendering them timely assistance. Shelley and

Williams were evidently on friendly terms with this young man, of whom they saw something later on in Pisa. Williams mentions meeting Luciardi at the theatre with Shelley one evening. One house on the beach particularly pleased them, and they learnt from Luciardi that it would be available for a hundred crowns a year. All hope of finding Byron a house on this coast was apparently abandoned as impossible, and Byron himself relinquished the project ; while Shelley shortly afterwards expresses himself as unwilling for the continuance of the close and exclusive intimacy which had recently subsisted between them. On the evening of the 11th they were back in Pisa, and two days later Williams notes how they "talk over the Spezia plan without coming to any conclusion." We do not learn from Williams's diary of any definite steps being taken to secure the house on the beach, but on the 15th April the friends learnt with much dismay and disappointment that the persons to whom the houses which they had calculated upon having for the summer belonged refused to let them at all—a contretemps which Byron attributed to the Piedmontese Government objecting to Shelley residing there after the recent Pisan disturbance. Captain Roberts wrote from Genoa that no houses in an eligible situation were to be had nearer than Villa Franca, near Nice. On the 17th Shelley and Williams drove to Leghorn, and thence along the coast, past l'Ardenza to Antignano and Montenero ; they saw many houses, but none that could in any manner suit them.

On the 23rd, therefore, Williams again set out for Lerici, this time accompanied by Claire and Jane, but two days later, without having apparently con-

cluded anything, they were back in Pisa ; and here evil tidings awaited them.

"Arrived at Pisa at 1.30," writes Williams in his diary. "Met Shelley at the door. His face bespoke his feelings. His sister's [sic] child was dead and he had the office to break it to her, or rather, not to do so, but fearful of the news reaching her ear, to remove her immediately from this place."

Thus Claire's worst apprehensions were realized, and her hopes and fears, self-torment, agitation, and vain regrets, at an end. Allegra was dead.

We must for the moment look back a little at the last months of the poor child's life, and at the circumstances which led to her untimely death.

Notwithstanding Shelley's efforts and urgencies that Allegra should not be left behind in the Romagna when her father definitely left that vicinity, Byron arrived in Pisa without her. Claire, who for two months had been waiting about between Leghorn, Pisa, and the neighbouring baths, returned a day or two later disconsolately to Florence.

Since the early months of 1821 Byron had been very vacillating in his plans for his child. Hoppner on more than one occasion urged him to send her to Switzerland, where he undertook to make suitable arrangements for her welfare. Byron was much pleased with his suggestions, but he kept on postponing any definite plans. In May, 1821, he wrote that for the present the child was so happy in her convent that it was better to leave her there to have her alphabet imparted. On the 23rd July, when Byron contemplated accompanying the Gambas to Switzerland, he wrote that Allegra should go with

him. The first intimation that he did not intend to pursue this course when circumstances deviated his path from Switzerland to Pisa is found in a letter from Shelley to Byron dated 21 October, 1821, from which the following is an extract :

" The Countess tells me that you think of leaving Allegra for the present at the convent. Do as you think best ; but I can pledge myself to find a situation for her here such as you would approve, in case you change your mind."

From the tone of this letter it is evident that Shelley felt that the greatest danger with Byron was that of crossing his perverse and obstinate will, and rousing thereby his opposition ; with the wisdom of the serpent and the harmlessness of the dove, he awaited a more favourable opportunity to press his point.

Dowden states that, on Lady Mountcashel's advice, Claire addressed to Byron two temperately-worded letters urging the dangers of Allegra's being left in Bagnacavallo, and entreating him to place her with some responsible family in Pisa, Florence, or Lucca. If necessary, she consented not to go near the child herself, nor should Shelley or Mary do so without Byron's consent. This must have been towards the end of 1821 or the beginning of 1822, but Dowden gives no date. Again on the 18th February, Claire addressed the obdurate poet. At this time she projected going as governess to Vienna, where her brother now lived and where she might prosecute the study of German. Byron's recent inheritance on the death of his mother-in-law she regarded as affording an auspicious moment for an appeal to his kinder feelings. " I assure you I can no longer resist

the internal inexplicable feeling which haunts me that I shall never see her any more," she wrote. "I entreat you to destroy this feeling by allowing me to see her. . . ."

The letter is one long appeal in this strain from the tantalized and despairing mother. Dowden prints it from a copy in Claire's writing, and unless (as she was quite capable of doing) Claire suppressed in the copy any remarks calculated to arouse Byron's spleen and resistance, it is indeed little to the credit of his heart and feelings that he did not grant her prayer. His prejudice against, and morbid dislike of, Claire, rendered him senseless to the feeling of common humanity, which should alone have influenced him in dealing with this mother's appeal for a sight of her child. The fact remains that he was obdurate and unmoved.

Shelley made yet another appeal to Byron's feelings on Claire's behalf, but was answered by "a shrug of impatience and the exclamation that women could not live without making scenes." Byron threatened, if further tormented on the matter, to shut Allegra up in a convent where none should have access to her. Claire came herself to Pisa, where she stayed from the 21st to 25th February, again departing disappointed, unhappy, and sick at heart. Throughout all this trying time the Masons stood staunchly by Claire, displaying—according to her later accounts—less philosophic endurance and patience with Byron than Shelley did. In one written account Claire (according to Dowden) attributes to December, 1821, a visit of Mr. Tighe's to Venice to make inquiries into the character of the Countess Guiccioli with a view to engaging her sympathy and championship

of Claire's cause, but from a MS. notebook I have seen, where no date is given, it seems to me that, for several reasons, the date indicated was more probably the winter of 1820-21, when Claire was on a long visit to the Masons. Here, moreover, she seems to speak rather of a projected visit to Venice than an accomplished one.¹

It is little wonder that, after the failure of all these appeals and contrivances, poor Claire's mind should have turned to wild schemes of fraud and violence for the recovery of her child. It would have been the same with any mother. Mary wrote to her urgently counselling patience and calmer reasoning ; tried to reassure Claire as to the healthiness of Bagnacavallo ; and, above all, argued how hopeless and vain was all opposition to the rich and powerful Byron, while he was so vigilantly on his guard, and *on the spot*. Later on he might return to England, might even become reconciled to his wife ; and would then be less keen for the guardianship of the child. As a final argument she put forward that spring had always been their unlucky season. A little later Shelley very properly deprecated in the strongest terms Claire's plans for forcible rescue, which seem to have included Shelley's forging a letter, and refusing a duel with Byron—plans which, he declares, besides involving them all (with the exception of the wronged mother herself) in irremediable infamy and ruin, would prove quite futile and impossible. She had no other resource but time, and chance, and change, he assured her. He urges her to systematize and simplify her

¹ Notebook in the possession of Mr. Buxton Forman.

motions, to spend the summer with them and tranquillize herself among her friends.

Meanwhile little Allegra remained with her nuns at the Capuchin Convent of Bagnacavallo. No tidings of aught being wrong with her seem to have reached Pisa till a few days before her death, when it would appear that Byron was informed that she was ill. A short interval of silence led him to hope that she had recovered, when, on the 22nd April, news reached him of her death. She had fallen a victim to an outbreak of typhus fever at the Convent, and, despite the care of the nuns and the attention of two doctors, had succumbed on the 20th.

Shelley's immediate care was to get Claire away from Pisa, before she could learn of her loss. That would be no moment for the overwrought and may-be distracted woman to be within a few yards of Lord Byron's house. At all costs Claire must leave immediately.

Mary was not well when the tidings of Allegra's death reached her. "Evil news. Not well" is the entry in her journal for the 23rd April. Once again she was expecting to become a mother, and, as was the case before the birth of Percy, her condition painfully affected the state of her nerves and general health. But in spite of these drawbacks, she was ready to start off with Claire and Trelawny,¹ on

¹ Trelawny apparently makes some confusion about his visits to San Terenzo, alleging an earlier one, accompanied by Williams. It is clear from Williams's diary that this is incorrect. Trelawny's first visit to San Terenzo was in April with Mary and Claire, but he is no doubt so far right in saying that he rode from San Terenzo to Genoa, whence he returned to Leghorn with the *Bolivar* in June.

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the very day following the return of Claire and the Williamses from their unsuccessful quest. They now made straight for Spezia, where it was decided they were immediately to settle as best they could for the lease of the Casa Magni at San Terenzo.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE CASA MAGNI—CLAIRE'S GRIEF—BURIAL OF ALLEGRA—
ARRIVAL OF THE "DON JUAN"—SHELLEY AND WILLIAMS AS SEAMEN

ON the 26th April, Shelley and the Williamses, after dispatching the furniture by boat in the care of the servants, set out towards evening for Lerici, passing the night at Pietra Santa. At Lerici next day they were not a little dismayed to find no house obtainable, and to be further informed that they would have to pay £300 dogana on the arrival of their furniture. However, the friendly harbour-master, Signor Maglian—who had proved accommodating on the occasion of their former visit—came to the rescue, and accompanied them on the 29th to the Chief of the Customs at Spezia, who, equally obligingly, took upon himself to allow the landing of the furniture, and to consider their house as a depot till further leave should arrive from the Genoese Government. But for Maglian's timely aid they would have been faced with the dismal necessity of returning their household goods to Pisa without unlading. In reply to Shelley's urgent inquiries, directed from Lerici to Mary at Spezia, he learnt that she had concluded for Casa Magni at San Terenzo. The Williamses, finding for themselves

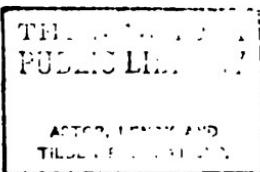
"no hope" of accommodation in the neighbourhood, resolved in despair to return their furniture to Pisa, but on the arrival of the two boats on the 30th, the whole load was unladen and stowed into the Casa Magni.

The Casa Magni, which stands to this day, though somewhat changed since Shelley's time, is a solid-looking white-stone building, with a porticoed terrace stretching the whole length of the façade, forming a kind of boathouse below, which in Shelley's time stood right on the sea-shore, splashed and washed by the waves. Now the main road, with its solid sea-wall, passes in front of the house, dividing it from direct contact with the waters. It is surrounded by a small walled-in garden, with entrance on the left side up a flight of a few steps. A large central room, which the Shelleys used as a dining-room, opened on to three smaller ones. The two front bedrooms were occupied by Shelley and Mary.

Though somewhat restricted as regards space and accommodation, the house in its sea-girt situation was ideal for Shelley. With its feet in the sea, and its shoulders to the hills, caressed and lashed in turn with the changing temper of the breezes from sea and land, the Casa Magni commanded a magnificent view across the Bay of Spezia to Porto Venere. The ever-changing face of the waters which he loved so passionately was before him, dazzlingly brilliant in the sunlight, ominously suggestive, terrible but not less lovely in its tempests. Behind the house the hillside was overgrown with walnut and ilex trees, which had recently been planted there by the reputedly insane owner of the *terreno*,



PORTO VENERE. (S. PIETRO)



who had for the purpose uprooted the more utilitarian olive-plantation which formerly covered it. To Mary there was something unusually English in the taste of this beautiful growth of young forest trees. The house was so close to the sea that the effect was almost equal to being on a ship ; at times the sea, under the influence of a heavy swell, kept them awake at night, lashing the shingly shore with a noise like the discharge of heavy artillery. "We all feel as if we were on board ship," wrote Williams, "and the roaring of the sea brings this idea to us even in our beds."

The few fishermen's huts which constituted the village of San Terenzo were at hand to the right, looking towards the sea, inhabited by a singularly wild and uncivilized race, according to the descriptions of Shelley and Mary. No main road existed then along the coast, and the more important village of Lerici, noted for the ruins of its ancient feudal castle, was reached by a winding path among the rocks.

In this idyllic retreat, housekeeping, however, proved no sinecure. The little town of Sarzana, some miles off in the Apennines, and divided from San Terenzo by the torrent of the Magra, was the nearest provision-market ; and even there supplies were none too profuse. The walk thither is through the most divine and inspiring scenery—pine and chestnut woods and olive-groves, mountain torrents and rugged mountain passes ; but this did not reconcile the Shelleys' Tuscan servants to the discomforts and hardships of the situation, and they threatened departure *en bloc*. "Had we been wrecked on an island of the South Seas, we could scarcely have

felt ourselves farther from civilization and comfort," wrote Mary, recalling these times. Even to-day as you approach San Terenzo by the main road from Lerici, dazzlingly white in the full glare of the Italian sun, a certain sense of isolation and melancholy comes over you : perhaps from the exceeding draught of beauty, or perhaps from association ; for the spirit of Shelley here, more than anywhere else where he sojourned, seems to haunt the place.

The costume of the women at Lerici—which, according to Mary Shelley and Medwin, was more or less on a par with that of Kipling's Soudanese—appears from an account given by Dr. John Polidori in 1821, which served as text to a volume on native costumes, illustrated by R. Bridgens, to have been decidedly picturesque and rather elaborate, somewhat resembling that of the Swiss peasant-women of the period, with the addition of a long net bag for the hair, which hung down the back, finished with elaborate tassels, and surmounted by small round hats with coloured ribands.

On the 1st May the Williamses followed the Shelleys and their own furniture into the Casa Magni, the Shelleys having contrived to give them rooms ; and after a busy day, getting their belongings into some kind of order, they spent the evening together "talking over their follies and their troubles."

On the day following, the painful task of imparting the tidings of her child's death to Claire could no longer be postponed. Williams tells how the poor girl set out on the 26th, "quite unconscious of the burden on her friends' minds." He also tells how, suddenly entering the room where they were talking over the best manner in which to break it to her,

the truth was suddenly borne in upon her, and she guessed the purport of their meeting.

The first hours of her bereavement were no doubt terrible for her and her friends, when all her dreams, and vague terrors, and forebodings for the little one returned and gripped her with the icy grip of truth, and all her hopes of reunion and maternal yearnings fell blasted to the ground. In these first hours she wrote a letter of bitter reproach to Byron, reproaching him no doubt with his obduracy, and heartlessness, and cruelty to the living and the dead. Byron returned Claire's letter to Shelley, who had not seen it before it was dispatched, and who, despite his disapproval of Byron's conduct and his present disgust with him, "sympathized too much in his loss, and appreciated too well his feelings" to have allowed such a letter to be sent had he known its contents. Indeed, from all accounts Byron's grief was not less poignant than Claire's. He had undoubtedly attached himself to little Allegra, and she had been associated with most of his plans and projects of recent years. In writing to Shelley of her death, he says: "I do not know that I have anything to reproach in my conduct, and certainly nothing in my feelings and intentions towards the dead." There is reason to believe that Byron, under an assumed name, visited Allegra's convent in Bagnacavallo some months after her death.

After the first shock, the first outbreak of her lacerated feelings, calm returned to Claire—that calm that is no longer disturbed by the torments of hope, the comparative happiness and final security of despair. Her first impulse was to rush off and embrace the coffin of the little creature whose

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presence in life had been denied her ; but Shelley succeeded in dissuading her from incurring this useless and painful ordeal, much to the profit of his own shattered health and spirits he wrote to Byron. Byron was willing that Claire's desires should regulate the funeral : but she left it to him, raising no objection to his desire that it should take place in England. He sent her a portrait of the child, and a lock of her hair.

A few last words about Allegra. By the 26th May, the coffin was embarked from Leghorn, and Byron wrote requesting his friend and publisher, John Murray, to supervise the funeral, and to have the little body buried in Harrow churchyard, near the famous elm-tree where Byron had so often sat when a boy. He desired a tablet with the following inscription to be placed inside the church :

In Memory of
ALLEGRA
daughter of G. G. Lord Byron
who died at Bagnacavallo
in Italy, April 20th, 1822,
aged five years and three months.

"I shall go to her, but she shall not return to me."

This was objected to by the respectable parishioners, "several leading and influential persons, laymen, in the parish." Byron's very honourable and creditable regard for the memory of his child—whom he had treated perhaps foolishly, but never without affection and solicitude—was considered disgraceful to him, because she was a "natural child."

The Vicar of Harrow wrote :

"It does seem to me that whatever he may wish

in the moment of his distress about the death of this child, he will afterwards regret that he should have taken pains to proclaim to the world what he will not, I am sure, consider as honourable to his name."

The final prohibition was worded as follows by the outraged churchwarden, James Winkley : "I object on behalf of the parish to admit the tablet to Lord Byron's child into the church."

So little Allegra was buried without tablet or monument at the entrance to Harrow Church, fortunately beyond the power or influence of the self-righteousness of these pharisees.

Claire remained till the 21st May at Casa Magni, when she returned for a short time to the Bojtos in Florence.

This was a sad beginning to the summer at San Terenzo ; and cloudy, rainy weather did not brighten the opening days. Mary's health and spirits were seriously affected by the fatigue and nervous strain she had been through ; she was extremely weak, nervously prostrate, and hysterical. The difficulties of housekeeping—she was not a brilliant house-keeper at best—and Jane's dissatisfaction at the community of kitchen interests, did not tend to alleviate her depression and nervousness. Shelley was not altogether unaware of these little domestic land-breezes ; but, naturally enough, they did not deeply affect him. "I write a little," he tells Claire, "I read and enjoy for the first time these ten years something like health ; I find, however, that I must neither think nor feel, or the pain returns to its old nest."

Sometimes, it is evident, the poet did think or feel

too keenly ; at such times his over-wrought nerves and imagination conjured up strange and terrifying visions, as when, on the 6th May, walking with Williams on the terrace in the moonlight, and talking of melancholy things, he of a sudden beheld the naked figure of a child (possibly Allegra) rise from the sea, and clap her hands as in joy, smiling at him. Indeed, a state of nervous tension and susceptibility seems to have been rife among them all, and it was not Shelley alone who was troubled with visions. Jane Williams, who was neither imaginative nor nervous, nor by any means addicted to visions, saw Shelley pass twice in the same direction along the terrace before her as she stood at the window, when in point of fact he was nowhere near. About a week later, on the night of Saturday, the 22nd June, Shelley was roused from his bed by terrifying dreams—or, as he declared, visions—and rushed into Mary's room. His eyes transfixed with horror, and his screams, so terrified Mary, that, though just recovering from a serious illness, and too ill to leave her bed, she staggered out, and fell half fainting into the Williamses' room. Talking it over the next morning, Shelley declared that he had lately had many visions. But this carries us a little forward.

Shelley's supreme refuge from all worry and melancholy—solitude and a boat—was not denied him. While anxiously awaiting the arrival of their boat from Genoa, he and Williams made the best shift they could with their old friend the little flat-bottomed boat of the Arno and the Serchio. The experiment was not entirely attended with success, and poor Jane got a severe douching in the course of the first trial with it on the sea.

On the 12th May, at last—a cloudy and threatening day—the boat arrived. While the friends were walking on the terrace with Signor Maglian, after dinner, a strange sail was discovered coming round the point of Porto Venere, and, guided by a Mr. Heslop and two English seamen, the much-desired and ill-omened boat was brought to them.

"It does indeed excite my surprise and admiration," writes Williams, with boyish delight. "Shelley and I walked to Lerici and made a stretch off the land. Tried her, and I find she fetches whatever she looks at. In short, we have now a perfect plaything for the summer."

From this time forward not a day passed that Shelley and Williams did not spend many hours in their new craft. On the 21st May they sailed to Spezia, where Shelley called on the Inspector of Customs, to request his interest in getting his precious books, freshly arrived from London, and directed to Pisa, landed. There was the usual trouble in Piedmontese territory with regard to censorship. "S[helley]'s application proved ineffective," writes Williams, "and with the curses of all parties away went the books for Genoa." On the 29th June, at last, to the surprise and delight of the dwellers in Casa Magni, the books were returned to them.

The only drawback the friends could find in their delightful new possession was the name that Lord Byron had insisted on having painted on the main-sail. The boat was originally to have been the joint property of Shelley, Trelawny, and Williams, and to have borne the name *Don Juan*, by Trelawny's choice. But Shelley was wise enough to realize that he was not a man for partnerships : and Mary in-

formed Mrs. Gisborne that the idea of sharing the boat with Trelawny (probably because of his close intimacy with Byron) became highly irksome to him. He therefore himself paid down the £80 for the boat, and became sole owner, and he and Mary chose the name *Ariel* in lieu of *Don Juan*. Byron took fire at this and determined that she should be called after his poem : so he wrote to Roberts to have that name painted on the mainsail, which was accordingly done. Shelley was equally determined the name should be effaced, and replaced by that of his own choice. After a number of vigorous but ineffectual attempts to accomplish this, he at last had the name cut out by a sailmaker.

Williams says that he and Shelley amused themselves after breakfast on the 22nd "with trying to make a boat as light and small as possible of canvas and reeds." The building of this little boat was somewhat of a labour of Penelope, for one day's work usually consisted in undoing that of the previous day. A carpenter was called in to help, but his efforts were equally unsuccessful. At last, however, on the 10th June, the little boat was finished, and successfully launched on the 12th. This frail barque attracted the surprise and wonder of the village, which was present *en masse* at its landing. The Italian sculptor Carlo Fontana, a native of Sarzana, remembers hearing in his boyhood the old people of San Terenzo speaking of Shelley—" *il matto inglese*"—and two old men and a woman recalled that he was wont to carry a raft down to the sea under his arm, and that he would lie in it using his arms as oars. The raft here referred to can scarcely have been Williams's boat, which weighed 86 lb.,

and was 8 feet long, and probably too heavy for Shelley to carry under his arm in the manner described.

Besides his initial visit to San Terenzo, Trelawny came there with Byron's yacht the *Bolivar*, and remained from the 13th to the 18th June. Along with him was Captain Roberts, the builder of the *Don Juan* and the *Bolivar*, who also occasionally visited the Casa Magni household, causing some excitement and dismay in the commissariat department. Trelawny's inimitable descriptions remain with us as the most vivid and charming pictures of Shelley and his circle which we have—a little circle which he "verily believed to have been at that time the most united and happiest set of human beings in the world."

Trelawny gives a most humorous account of Shelley and Williams in the *Ariel*—"Shelley in ecstasies with his boat, and Williams as touchy about her reputation as if she had been his wife." They were hardly ever out of her, and talked of the Mediterranean as a lake too confined and tranquil to exhibit her sea-going excellence. Williams was busy instructing Shelley in the art of seamanship, and Trelawny describes the proceedings as follows :

"As usual, Shelley had a book in hand, saying he could read and steer at the same time, as one was mental, the other mechanical.

"'Luff!' said Williams.

"Shelley put the helm the wrong way. Williams corrected him. . . .

"'Luff!' said Williams, as the boat was yawing about. 'Shelley, you can't steer, you have got her in the wind's eye; give me the tiller, and you attend the main-sheet. Ready about!' said Williams.

'Helm down—let go the fore-sheet—see how she spins round on her heel—is not she a beauty? Now, Shelley, let go the main-sheet, and, boy, haul aft the jib-sheet!'

"The main-sheet was jammed, and the boat unmanageable, or, as sailors express it, in irons; when the two had cleared it, Shelley's hat was knocked overboard, and he would probably have followed if I had not held him. He was so uncommonly awkward that, when they had things shipshape, Williams, somewhat scandalized at the lubberly manœuvre, blew up the poet for his neglect and inattention to orders. Shelley was, however, so happy, and in such high glee, and the nautical terms so tickled his fancy, that he even put his beloved Plato in his pocket, and gave his mind up to fun and frolic."

Trelawny also gives a delightful description of how the bard interrupted a little dinner-party (at which Roberts must have been the "visitor from Genoa") and scandalized the ladies by suddenly appearing stark naked, on his way through the central living-room to reach his clothes in his bedroom, both himself and the clothes he had been wearing having been recently overturned by his little boat into the water. The company had dined unusually early, and Shelley had expected to find the room vacant. All this he innocently stopped to explain, and to exculpate himself, while the Italian servant tactfully tried to screen him from the party.

Trelawny was also present on the return of Shelley and Jane Williams from the famous boat trip, when he called upon his companion to solve with him "the great mystery."

Roberts remained behind in the neighbourhood, and left for Leghorn with Shelley and Williams on the *Ariel* on the 1st July.

Shelley's restless spirit was never at home within four walls : he loved to live and work in the open, with the ample dome of heaven as his ceiling, and the far-stretching vista of the waters and the free air as sole boundary : thus he would lie in his *Ariel*, imagining and writing down the stanzas of his "Triumph of Life," his last great, unfinished masterpiece. Or, with the trunks of the forest trees for walls, and their interlaced branches overhead, lying on a carpet of pine-needles and pignole, weeds and flowers, ivy and lichen, he would hastily write down the lyric verses that welled up from his imagination and "boiled" in his brain ; oblivious of all human interests and limits of time. Trelawny has described finding him thus engaged in the lovely pine-forest near Pisa, when he and Mary, in their search for the missing poet, interrupted the verses addressed to Jane Williams, which accompanied his gift of a guitar.

At no period of his sojourn in Italy was Shelley more contented or in better health than during these last few weeks of his life in the Gulf of Spezia. "I still inhabit this divine bay," he wrote to Horace Smith nine days before his death, "reading Spanish dramas, and sailing, and listening to the most enchanting music. We have some friends on a visit to us, and my only regret is that the summer must ever pass, or that Mary has not the same predilection for this place that I have, which would induce me never to shift my quarters."

Shelley's content and peace in San Terenzo were

not suffered to endure without serious interruption, however. On the 9th June¹ Mary's state of nervous ill-health and prostration culminated in an alarming miscarriage, which endangered her life and to which she would in all likelihood have succumbed had it not been for Shelley's prompt and energetic action in applying ice unsparingly without waiting for tardy medical intervention or approbation. It is part of the resourcefulness of genius that so unworldly a poet as Shelley can at times plunge out of poetry into midwifery without committing manslaughter.

Claire had fortunately arrived in San Terenzo two days earlier. The care of her husband and friends, and the pure sea air which she could breathe in without fatigue from the terrace of her room, tided Mary over this dangerous crisis, which left her, however, miserably weak, and unfit to endure the terrible ordeal she was destined shortly to go through. Two weeks after this miscarriage her recovery was retarded by the shock she experienced in consequence of Shelley's dream or "vision" previously referred to.

¹ Williams gives this date in his diary. In Mary's letter to Mrs. Gisborne, written shortly after Shelley's death, she gives Sunday, the 16th June, as the date of actual miscarriage. Williams makes no reference to any untoward event on that date: moreover, Trelawny, who was at San Terenzo from the 13th to the 18th June, gives no hint of it. When Mary wrote to Mrs. Gisborne her mind was in considerable confusion as to time and date, and it seems possible the mistake was hers.

CHAPTER XXVII

LEIGH HUNT—SHELLEY AND WILLIAMS LEAVE FOR LEGHORN

ON the 19th June news reached Shelley of the arrival in Genoa of Leigh Hunt and his family. This brought to a close a long period of anxiety and uncertainty regarding the fate and whereabouts of his friends.

Ever since the middle of the previous November, Leigh Hunt and his numerous family had been buffeted about by adverse winds, and driven hither and thither about the English coast, unable to make any progress towards Italy. Finally, after several vain alarms and excursions, they did actually sail on the 13th May, and after a propitious voyage duly arrived in Genoa on the 15th June.

It is not difficult to imagine poor Shelley's perplexities and distress during the period of Hunt's marine vicissitudes. The weather had been very stormy, and the fate of the party at times highly problematic. On the other hand, Byron was vacillating in his disposition and enthusiasms, and what fixity of purpose he possessed with regard to the Review which was luring Hunt to Italy was being continually and subtly attacked by the influence of his friends in London. Shelley used all his tact

and influence to keep Byron up to the mark ; but it was a kind of diplomacy little to his taste. And meanwhile, to render a disagreeable situation worse, Hunt continually urged him to apply to Byron for funds on his behalf, all the money which Shelley and Horace Smith had provided having been futilely dissipated by delay. Shelley, having sent all he himself could possibly spare, at last complied, and Byron advanced a further £200 to Hunt on Shelley's bond. At the same time Shelley urged his friend not to leave England without making proper arrangements for the receipt of a regular income from the profits of the *Examiner*, for he realized better than his volatile friend did how necessary it was that he and his family should have some kind of independence apart from Byron's scheme. Byron, moreover, had set his heart on the "use of a weekly paper in great circulation"—Hunt's connection with which enhanced his own reputation in the literary and political world.

Leigh Hunt was in his thirty-eighth year when he came to Italy, Byron's senior by three and Shelley's by eight years. He had known Lord Byron personally since the year 1814, when Byron visited him in prison, though he had actually seen him for the first time, swimming in the Thames, some years previously. Hunt and Shelley had been friends since December, 1816, when Shelley paid Hunt a visit of some days' duration at Hampstead, though they, too, had actually met some years previously, when the younger poet had called more than once on Hunt to seek his advice in regard to the publication of some verses. Previous to this visit Shelley had addressed a letter to Leigh Hunt from Oxford, and

in 1813 he sought to head a subscription list for the purpose of paying off the fine imposed on the journalist and his brother for seditious libel on the Prince Regent; and to Hunt in prison he further wrote making him "a princely offer." So Hunt himself has recorded, as also that this offer (whatever it may have been) was graciously refused. Shelley's relations with his friends generally consisted in giving. Before visiting Hunt in 1816, he relieved his financial troubles by giving him a considerable sum of money, and Trelawny complained that with the exception of Hogg and Horace Smith, all Shelley's friends treated him as their banker. Among these friends, Leigh Hunt, who described himself as the "dearest," was probably the most costly.

Shelley and Leigh Hunt became friends at one of the most critical periods, and certainly the most painful, of Shelley's life—shortly after the suicide of Fanny Wollstonecraft, and of Harriet Shelley, whose body was recovered from the Serpentine on the very day of his visit to Leigh Hunt; and they saw a good deal of one another during the period of the disgraceful Chancery suit which deprived the poet of the custody of his children by his first marriage. It was a moment when friendship and sympathy were precious, and were certain to be warmly appreciated and kindly remembered. In Hunt's society, and that of the agreeable intellectual circle he gathered round him in his tasteful Hampstead home, bright with flowers and works of art, and cheered by song and music, Shelley, and more particularly Mary, found some solace and distraction from care and trouble during this more than usually black and troublous period of their lives. Hunt had, moreover, struck

an agreeably discordant note in the literary criticism of his day, by referring to Shelley as a "very striking and original thinker" in an article on "Young Poets," which he wrote for the *Examiner* in December, 1816. Hunt was a kindly man of ingenuous and unsoured nature—though some of his characteristics were perhaps calculated to sour that of his less unsophisticated neighbours—and as such he appealed to Shelley, whose abhorrence of a man of blunt sensibility was only exceeded by his detestation of a bore.

It is curious how certain light touches will at times give a more lucid image of a personality than much careful and elaborate brushwork. In a chaffy letter concerning Hunt's marine vicissitudes, Hogg pictures the alternative of a land journey, and Hunt delaying his progress towards Italy to gather daisies on the road. This piece of chaff gives us an impression of the author of "Foliage" and "Nimini Pimini" (as Byron renamed "A Story of Rimini") in a nutshell. By some delicate appeal to our fancy, it conjures up the man, kindly, gentle, artistic—that is, one possessing much of the weaker side of the "artistic temperament" and little of its strength; a simple-hearted and generous man; petty-minded in spite of his broad sympathies and understanding, somewhat futile: a man who had suffered for his principles, but who would pause in his more serious avocations to pick daisies and crack puns. If the nature of the poet is childlike, a nature such as this is somewhat childish.

In his book on "Lord Byron and some of his Contemporaries" Leigh Hunt is painfully petty-minded. He disclaims all obligation or need for

gratitude, but shows himself equally lacking in good-feeling and dignity. The situation glanced at in these pages was singularly delicate and difficult, and required tackling with a bolder hand, or leaving altogether alone. It is only fair to add that the Hunt of later years—the Leigh Hunt of his Auto-biography—was as keenly aware of these defects as his most critical reader could be ; he is a quite different man, still rather small in scale, but far more dignified, and juster ; not free from weakness, but cognizant of his weakness ; a man who had emerged from the irritability of youth to the serenity of age.

Godwin describes Hunt as “a man of factitious, though perfectly sincere, character, made up out of notions derived out of Italian poetry and whims of various kinds”¹—an admirably comprehensive and convincing picture of the man.

Altogether Hunt, with his many charms and virtues, was scarcely the man who could have weathered the many meteorological changes of long personal intercourse and intimacy with Shelley ; with Byron his relations were bound to end in comparative disaster.

When the news of the safe arrival of his friend in Genoa reached Shelley, he would willingly have set sail immediately to join him in the City of Palaces ; but Hunt’s letter had been transmitted to him with some delay from Pisa, and the fear arose lest he might have left ere Shelley could reach.

On the 1st July Shelley heard that the Hunt family had arrived at Leghorn ; it was a calm, clear day, and when at noon a fine breeze sprang up Shelley

¹ Mrs. Gisborne’s journal, 1820.

yielded without delay to the temptation to set sail for Leghorn. At two he and Williams set sail, bidding adieu to their homes and their wives and children for the last time. Mary was still ill and woefully weak and melancholy ; she was oppressed by half-conscious terrors, and loth to part with her husband ; she wept bitterly at his departure, and two or three times called him back. Had she been stronger and capable of undertaking the journey, she would not have suffered him to depart without her.

At half-past two the friends stretched across to Lerici, where they picked up Captain Roberts, and in the evening reached Leghorn, where, unable to land after sunset as the Health Office was closed, they anchored astern of Byron's schooner the *Bolivar*, from which they procured cushions, and made up their beds on deck, wrapped round with the kindly warmth of an Italian July night.

CHAPTER XXVIII

BYRON AT THE VILLA DUPUY—EXPULSION OF THE GAMBAS FROM TUSCANY—BYRON DETERMINED TO FOLLOW THEM—MEETING OF SHELLEY AND LEIGH HUNT—THE PROSPECTS OF THE “LIBERAL”

L EIGH HUNT had arrived in Leghorn on or about the 27th June, and after writing to Shelley to acquaint him with his arrival, he set out on foot the following day for Montenero, distant some five kilometres from Leghorn, to discover Byron in his summer retreat. Lord Byron, since about the 25th May, had been settled in the Villa Dupuy, splendidly situated on the fine fertile slopes of Montenero, commanding a magnificent view over hills and mountains and sea—“with the islands of Elba and Corsica visible from my balcony, and my old friend the Mediterranean rolling blue at my feet”—to quote Byron's own words.

The Villa Dupuy still stands—a handsome two-storied house, sufficiently unpretentious and inviting, though it impressed Trelawny unfavourably—with fine grounds and seventeenth-century terrace garden at the back, gay with flowers, orange-trees, and statues : delightful to loiter in towards evening, when the ardour of the sun has abated and the cool purple

shades of evening descend on the hills. The statues, somewhat mutilated in the course of Byron's pistol practice, are still there, and local tradition has it that the poet and Teresa Guiccioli were wont to wander about the garden of the Villa habited in the Greek costume.

Here Byron, Teresa Guiccioli, and the Gambas, with all their miscellaneous collection of servants and satellites, were settled when Leigh Hunt arrived in Tuscany. Byron was ill satisfied with his new abode on account of the lack of a proper supply of drinking water—a state of things which led to his taking civil action against the proprietor, Signor Francesco Dupuy. Shelley's old friend Avv. Federico del Rosso, of Leghorn, and the equally celebrated Avv. Collini, of Florence, acted for Byron, but after considerable legal delay—further procrastinated on more than one occasion by Byron's pride and intractability—the case was decided against Byron, and he had to pay the expenses. But more serious factors were at work to drive Byron from the Villa Dupuy when Leigh Hunt arrived there.

The noble poet's predilection for bloodthirsty followers—*gente manesca*—which had already caused trouble in the Masi affair, now led to further startling developments.

At five o'clock on the afternoon of the 28th June a battle royal between Byron's various domestic followers on the one side, and the Countess Guiccioli, Pietro Gamba, and Byron's *segretario* Lega on the other, took place. Pistols and knives were drawn on both sides, but no very serious damage was done, beyond a slight wound which the young Gamba sustained under the right eye. Byron's mutinous

domestics were under the impression that the Gambas were in league with Byron's *segretario* to cheat them of their proper dues from Byron, and quiet was only restored by the withdrawal of Lega from the contest.¹ Byron is said to have maintained a dignified aloofness from the fray, but to have forthwith dismissed one of his cooks, and settled to part with other disorderly elements in his household. According to the other account of the row (which, of the two, appears the more probable), the animus of Byron's servants was directed, not against Lega, but against the Countess's *cameriere*, and she and her brother merely entered the contest on his behalf. Byron is here said to have finally quelled the disturbance by emerging on to the terrace armed with pistols. The offending servant is alleged to have fled, and he and others were forthwith dismissed.² The writer of this report significantly adds :

"From what I gather from the police reports, disputes and domestic disturbances are continually occurring in the Villa, and the constant pistol practice which goes on there causes some alarm to the inhabitants round."

According to Leigh Hunt's account of his visit to Byron at Montenero, he arrived there while all this shindy was in progress ; found Byron much changed and grown stouter, la Guiccioli and her brother highly excited, the latter with his arm in a sling, and very angry ; Teresa more angry than he,

¹ This account, founded on the Report of the Commissario dei Sobbborghi of Leghorn, now in the historical Archives of Leghorn, was kindly furnished me, along with the following one, by Avv. G. F. Guerrazzi.

² Report (unsigned) to the President of the Buon Governo.

and not at all disposed to listen to "the charitable comments of Lord Byron, who was for making light of the matter." Down below the servant who was ringleader of the mutiny was mounting guard at the door, "with the avowed intention of assaulting the first person who issued forth"; Leigh Hunt, looking out of the window, "met his eye, glaring upward like a tiger. The fellow had a red cap on like a sans culotte," he adds, "and a most sinister aspect, dreary and meagre, a proper caitiff. Thus it appeared the house was in a state of blockade, the nobility and gentry of the interior all kept in a state of impossibility by a rascally footman."

However, when—according to Leigh Hunt's account—Byron issued forth at the head of his little company for his usual evening ride, the infuriated domestic melted at sight of his master, burst into tears, and "begged Byron to kiss him"—which the noble lord declined as an unnecessary excess of charity. He next kissed Byron's hand, gave his own in all penitence to the young Count, and was duly forgiven his delinquencies, but at the same time resolutely dismissed. On his way out of the country the dismissed man, so Leigh Hunt recounts, called upon Shelley, "who gave him some money out of his very disgust; for he thought nobody would help such a fellow if he did not."

I have referred in some detail to this curious domestic upheaval, because it was the prime factor which led to Byron's immediate withdrawal from Montenero, and finally from Tuscany, whence the Gambas were forthwith banished; and also because Leigh Hunt's account, which cannot be doubted as in the main true, however picturesquely embellished

in detail, points to the fact that he must have been in Leghorn some days earlier than is generally reckoned—fully four or five days before he and Shelley met on the 2nd July.

"Upon seeing Lord Byron," Leigh Hunt writes, "I hardly knew him, he was grown so fat; and he was longer in recognizing me, I had grown so thin. He was dressed in a loose nankin jacket and white trousers, his neck-cloth open, and his hair in thin ringlets about his throat; altogether presenting a very different aspect from the compact, energetic, and curly-headed person whom I had known in England."

It can easily be supposed that little of a practical nature in regard to the proposed journal or anything else was decided on the occasion of this first dramatic interview between the collaborators; and Leigh Hunt must have retired somewhat bewildered and disconsolate to Leghorn, with a queer impression of the new country he had selected to dwell in, and of its inhabitants, whom Englishmen of his generation were never unwilling to figure to themselves as brigands and cut-throats. At Leghorn he proceeded to take temporary lodgings for himself and his family.

On the 2nd July he and Shelley met. Leigh Hunt's eldest son, Thornton, who had been familiar with the poet since his early boyhood, has described his emotion on again meeting his friend after so many sorrows and vicissitudes. Leigh Hunt found Shelley little changed—"he was the same as ever with the exception of less hope."

We have but scanty accounts of Shelley's last days, now rapidly drawing to a close in the impenetrable mystery of his death. His last acts were charac-

teristic of the man's whole life ; he was untiring and full of energy in his efforts to help his friends, his very hopefulness warring with the impatient despondency habitual to him.

His time was spent between Leghorn and Pisa, and was fully occupied in discussing the magazine with Byron, and labouring to keep him to his resolutions with regard to it : a difficult task at a moment when Byron's mind was perturbed by domestic upheavals, and by the terror of further home discomfort which the living presence of Leigh Hunt and his large family awakened in his breast. Once again Byron's thoughts turned towards Switzerland as a residence—Trelawny being one day requested to take steps for conveying the *Bolivar* overland to the Lake of Geneva, and a few days later dispatched to Lucca to feel his way there with a view to Byron and the Gambas selecting that city as a refuge. " His first idea was to sail to America," Shelley wrote, " which has been changed for Switzerland, then to Genoa, and last to Lucca. Everybody is in despair, and everything in confusion." At such tidings poor Mary must have felt like Cassandra when she recalled her own letter to Hunt, gloomily warning him against the dangers of the enterprise.

This was altogether a terribly unfortunate moment for the arrival of Leigh Hunt with a sick wife and an unruly and numerous family of children, with no means, funds, or prospects, beyond those which depended on the long-suffering Shelley and his erratic and irascible friend, who only learnt now, to his considerable dismay and disgust, that Leigh Hunt had severed his connection with the *Examiner*, and had landed in Italy without any visible or invisible,

tangible or intangible, means of support, and in immediate and urgent need of funds. Byron, from being a somewhat reckless and extravagant man, had gradually grown into a careful one, who, though generous and even lavish when and where he chose, became singularly restive under pressure or persecution for the disbursement of money. He had long discarded all aristocratic disregard for £ s. d., drove hard bargains with his publishers, whom he would not suffer to do him out of guineas into pounds ; and wrote in "Don Juan," not altogether without sincerity, that :

" . . . for a good old-gentlemanly vice,
I think I must take up with avarice."

Shelley's first step was to accompany Hunt and his family to Pisa, and install them in the ground floor of the Palazzo Lanfranchi, which he and Mary had furnished for them at Byron's expense before leaving town, and to bring Vaccà to see Mrs. Leigh Hunt, whose health continued to cause alarm. Vaccà's verdict, that Marianne Hunt was suffering from nephritis, and could not have long to live, added to the general confusion and disaster which was gathering round. Vaccà was fortunately mistaken in this diagnosis ; and Marianne Hunt survived nearly all concerned—Shelley and Mary, and Vaccà himself—many years. She died in 1857.

The same day that Shelley helped to settle the Hunts in the Palazzo Lanfranchi, Byron and la Guiccioli arrived there. The Gambas on the 1st July had received notice to quit Tuscany within four days, and Byron had once again espoused the cause and fortune of his *carbonari* friends. In person he

accompanied Count Gamba to the Tribunal where he received the sentence of banishment, and wrote to the Governor of Leghorn requesting a few days' respite for his friends as he wished to depart with them, and had many affairs to settle. "I will abandon in their company this country," he wrote, "for the land which denies a refuge to the unfortunate and a home to my friends, is not the place where I can consent to dwell." His departure from Montenero was slightly delayed by a serious accident to his carriage, which was overturned and badly damaged immediately before he was to have entered it.

Byron was not the man to conceal his ill-humour so as to spare other people's feelings : he did not give the Hunts a hearty welcome to his house. Teresa Guiccioli and Marianne Hunt met in silence ; and Williams wrote that Byron's reception of the ailing woman was shameful. In a moment of literary enthusiasm and annoyance with his publisher and the cant of the critics, he had let himself in for a situation which to a man of his temperament was intolerable, and unfortunately not less so to the other parties to the transaction. Trelawny tersely describes Byron's gloomy despair on discovering in what a hornets' nest he had landed himself.

"Usually meeting him after two or three days' absence," he wrote, "his eyes glistened ; now they were dull and his brow pale. He said :

" 'I offered you those rooms. Why did you not take them? . . . '

"When I took my leave he followed me into the passage, and patting the bulldog on the head he said, 'Don't let any Cockneys pass this way.' "

The Review, Byron declared to Trelawny, would be an abortion ; and he would have nothing to do with it. Williams wrote that he actually declared that he would not have his name associated with it.

It was Shelley's determination, for his friends' sake, that the Review should not prove an abortion. He laboured with all his energy and tact to extract some definite promise from Byron, so that he should not leave Pisa without having made suitable arrangements with Hunt. Shelley did not fail in his efforts. Byron was induced not to abandon the project, and it was further agreed that the magazine should be political in scope, and "assist in carrying on the good cause"—the name of the *Liberal* being bestowed on it by Byron. Shelley succeeded, moreover, in getting Byron to offer the copyright of the "Vision of Judgment" for the first number of the *Liberal*. "This offer, if sincere, is *more* than enough to set up the journal," he wrote with a ray of hope, "and, if sincere, will set everything right."

It would appear that this promise of Byron's succeeded somewhat in allaying Shelley's anxiety and depression, and that his last day in Pisa, Sunday, the 7th July, was spent agreeably and cheerfully in showing Hunt about the old town, visiting the Cathedral, etc. Williams, more particularly, was impatient to be back with his Jane, whom he knew not to be very happy in her solitary intercourse with Mary, and it was arranged that on the following day they should sail from Leghorn to San Terenzo. But Leigh Hunt promised himself great pleasure from future intercourse with his friend, and Shelley, on his side, was determined on making pretty frequent incursions into Pisa during the summer ; indeed,

there was some idea of removing to Pugnano for the remainder of the season—a consummation much desired by Mary, who hated the beautiful and, to her, oppressive San Terenzo.

Before leaving Pisa, Shelley called on Mrs. Mason, and she found him looking better in health and spirits than she had ever known him. He was leaving Pisa lighter-hearted than he had entered it. He parted with the Hunts towards evening for the fifteen-mile drive into Leghorn, and Hunt handed the poet his copy of Keats's last volume to read on the voyage.

"Keep it until you give it to me with your own hands," he said to him. And he entreated him not to venture on his sea-voyage on the morrow if the weather were stormy. For a long drought and oppressive heat were at last tending ominously towards a change.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE WRECK OF THE "DON JUAN"—SHELLEY'S COURAGE AND OTHER QUALITIES—ITALIAN INFLUENCES

THE 8th July dawned on another day of sullen heat, but clouds commenced to gather, and rain, which had been sorely needed, and long hoped for and prayed for, at last appeared imminent. For weeks past the weather, with occasional threat and miscarriage of gale, had been exceptionally hot. In Parma the peasants had been compelled to abandon all field work between the hours of ten and four on account of the excessive power of the sun ; throughout Tuscany and the adjacent provinces drought was everywhere, and processions of priests carrying miraculous images and holy relics went about praying for rain.

Shelley, ever indifferent to danger, was not disposed to alter his plans because meteorological conditions were unpropitious. Often the fisher-folk of San Terenzo had adjured him not to go to sea in tempestuous weather ; but he had never heeded their advice, and would set off boldly in his little cockle-shell of a boat to battle with the waves.

When Shelley willed a thing, there was no stopping him ; fear was unknown to him, and he could not be

moved once his mind was made up. The popular conception of a weak, effeminate, ineffectual person is even beneath the level of most popular absurdities. He was far the strongest man in his circle ; Byron was a capricious child beside him ; Trelawny—himself a man of iron will and a model of mule-like obstinacy—like all his other friends, deferred to his will, and admitted it to be the most inflexible. It was not less so because he united to it extreme gentleness of manner. Byron's will, like the man, was volcanic—all energy and little stamina, as Trelawny said of him—and being volcanic in nature, it was exercised by fits and starts, was uncertain and unreliable ; at times quiescent, at other times pouring forth, with much accompaniment of noise and smoke and flame, in a torrent of lava. Shelley's will was even and unruffled. "I always go on until I am stopped," he said, "and I never am stopped."

So on the 8th July, shortly after 2 p.m., Shelley and Williams and the sailor lad attached to the *Ariel* embarked. Trelawny, in command of the *Bolivar*, desired to accompany them into the offing ; but was stopped by the guard-boat, which overhauled his papers, and finding that he had not obtained the necessary port-clearance, which the port-captain had refused the mate, permission to sail was declined.¹

¹ It may here be mentioned that the *Bolivar* was at this moment in ill-odour with the authorities for more than one reason. The name itself, which, contrary to the custom for private boats, the crew wore inscribed on bands round their caps, was regarded as striking a dangerous and defiant note ; then Byron, seconded in his request by the British Legation, had obtained permission for the *Bolivar* to cruise along the Tuscan coast, embarking and landing passengers at pleasure ; and the Pisan bugbear, Tita, and another servant exiled from Tuscany over the Masi affray, were suspected

Sullenly and reluctantly Trelawny re-anchored, furled the *Bolivar's* sails, and with a ship's glass watched the progress of his friend's boat. The Genoese mate of the *Bolivar* observed to him that his friends should have sailed at three or four a.m. instead of at three p.m., and that the gaff-top-sail was foolish in a boat with no deck and no sailor on board. "Look at those black lines and the dirty rags hanging on them out of the sky," he said ; "they are a warning ; look at the smoke on the water ; the devil is brewing mischief."

"There was a sea-fog, in which Shelley's boat was soon after enveloped," adds Trelawny, "and we saw nothing more of her."

Nor was she seen again by Trelawny or any of Shelley's friends till two months later, when she was recovered from ten fathoms of water.

The heaviness of the sullen atmosphere, the deadly stillness and silence that heralds the outbursts of the forces of Nature, weighed on Trelawny's senses ; he went below to his cabin and sank into slumber. A loud noise overhead and the sound of much bustle roused him some three hours later. Let him tell his story in his own vigorous and picturesque language :

"There was a general stir amongst the shipping — shifting berths, getting down yards and masts, veering out cables, hauling in of hawsers, letting go anchors, hauling from the ships and quays, boats sculling rapidly to and fro. It was almost dark, although only half-past six o'clock. The sea was of being on board. This boat, captained by the dauntless Trelawny, may well have appeared an undesirable alien, a suspicious privateer, to the authorities.

of the colour and looked as solid and smooth as a sheet of lead, and covered with an oily scum. Gusts of wind swept over without ruffling it, and big drops of rain fell on its surface, rebounding, as if they could not penetrate it. There was a commotion in the air, made up of many threatening sounds, coming upon us from the sea. Fishing craft and coasting vessels under bare poles rushed by us in shoals, running foul of the ships in the harbour. As yet the din and hubbub was that made by men, but their shrill pipings were suddenly silenced by the crashing voice of the thunder-squall that burst right over our heads. For some time no other sounds were to be heard than the thunder, wind, and rain. When the fury of the storm, which did not last for more than twenty minutes, had abated, and the horizon was in some degree cleared, I looked to seaward anxiously, in the hope of descrying Shelley's boat amongst the many small craft scattered about. I watched every speck that loomed on the horizon, thinking that they would have borne up on their return to the port, as all the other boats that had gone out in the same direction had done."

When the fury of the storm had spent itself, and the winds and the waters subsided, earth and the heavens resumed in some degree their wonted benign aspect, indifferent to the fact that the little human race had sustained a loss in the interval, and that one of the brightest and noblest spirits which had dwelt among it was no more. Percy Bysshe Shelley, along with Edward Williams and Charles Vivian, the sailor boy, had gone down with the *Ariel*.

Thus in impenetrable mystery Shelley's life was closed. What the last moments were, and how pre-

cisely the end came, none may know. He was spared the protracted agony of disease and gradual decay, and was suddenly seized from the world at the very zenith of his powers. The world, which is so curious of the every word and movement of a man like Shelley, must accept the silence and mystery of his end. We know only that he had been reading Leigh Hunt's volume of Keats, and that at the moment of danger it had apparently been thrust into his pocket with the pages turned back at the "Eve of St. Agnes": so it was found on his corpse. It is a familiar and convincing picture of Shelley in the face of danger: his mind intent on other matters, unheeding the buffets of the storm. It is pretty certain that he went down without a struggle, unwilling that his friend, who could swim (and who from the condition of the corpse, when recovered, had apparently made some attempt thus to save himself), should risk anything on his account. He had "solved the mystery" and found the elusive truth at the bottom of the well. Had he been allowed to select the scene and manner of his death we feel that he would not have chosen otherwise.

Few men have borne the burden of life so impatiently as Shelley. Not that he was by any means always melancholic, or that he lacked courage to support its trials: his courage was signal, and his spirits often gay and cheerful. What he felt, in a degree that perhaps no other mortal has felt or expressed, was an absolute impatience of bodily and material restrictions, even as though life were something that weighed down on the soul and oppressed it, not the breath which lent it ephemeral being. He did not believe in personal immortality; he was

firm to the end in his unbelief, excepting in some very vague and symbolic sense ; his reason could adduce no proof of it. And yet one feels that he came nearer to an absolute conception of the immaterial *independence* of the soul than any other of our poets and thinkers. Life was irksome to him, his wingless and tired body was a drag on him ; only when comparatively free from its encumbrance, gliding or rolling on the water, with its swift and soothing motion so opiate to the bodily senses, was Shelley unconscious of the burden. Giacomo Leopardi, writing a few years after Shelley's death, expressed this feeling :

" Maybe if I had wings
To soar above the clouds,
And one by one enumerate the stars,
Or like the lightning roll from sphere to sphere,
I might be happier. . . . "

Having no definite belief, Shelley was impatient of the mystery of death, with its unimagined possibilities. Again and again he tempted death, fearless, and full of curiosity ; and death by drowning seemed to present positive attractions to him. Hunt wrote that he had expressed the wish that the sea might be his death-bed. Byron, Trelawny, Henry Reveley, and Mary Shelley have all attested his undaunted courage and indifference when faced with the danger of death by drowning ; Trelawny recalls his almost eager pursuit of the mysterious secret. Shelley had no knowledge or experience of swimming, but on being told that he could doubtless swim if persuaded of his power to do so, he immediately doffed his clothes and plunged into the adjacent Arno, " and

there he lay stretched out on the bottom like a conger eel, not making the least effort or struggle to save himself. He would have been drowned if I had not instantly fished him out. When he recovered his breath he said : 'I always find the bottom of the well, and they say truth lies there. In another minute I should have found it, and you would have found an empty shell. It is an easy way of getting rid of the body.' "

In most respects the Shelley who died in the Mediterranean on the 8th July, 1822, was the same man who had crossed the Alps into Italy a little more than four years previously. In essentials he was not changed : "The same, with the exception of less hope," Leigh Hunt described him. The Shelley of Italy is a more human and less intangible person than the youth who wrote "Alastor."

Certainly, the man of thirty—he was within one month of being thirty at the time of his death—the author of the "Triumph of Life," was less sanguine than the youth of twenty who had written "Queen Mab"; yet while his hopes were less buoyant than of yore, they were the same hopes, unchanged and unchanging, though dimmed by the sorrows and disillusionments of ten years. Few men have been so steadfast in essentials as Shelley. It was his very tenacity in the main issues of life that rendered him somewhat fickle towards the unstable race of men and women who traverse it: he could not always adapt himself to their inconsistencies and changes. His face was always turned to the light; intellectual independence, untrammelled by superstition or prejudice, the supremacy of reason over passion from within or compulsion from without; freedom, and

love, were his creed in the beginning as in the end. They are the "sound subject-matter"—so singularly elusive to the blind and the prejudiced—which runs through all his writings as through his life, which, however ideal and elusive at times may be his imagery, have lent such enduring strength and purpose to his work, and have imparted to it a vitality and an influence which have endured to our day, and which gain strength with the passing of years. Shelley was too intrinsically a poet to set out to preach these ideas or to teach these feelings ; but they are the vital essence of his poetry, which reaches us through the subtlest, but the surest, channels of the mind.¹ "The great instrument of moral good is the imagination," he wrote, "and poetry administers to the effect by acting upon the cause."

Dying, as he did, before completing his thirtieth year, Shelley must have left undone much that might have added to the intellectual wealth of the race, but he could not himself have become a more complete or a greater personality. Nor do we feel that his work was incomplete. He had accomplished so much, left us such an inestimable and unconsumable treasure. Had all the years of Sir Timothy been allotted to his son, they could not have enhanced his immortality.

Of the influence of Italy on Shelley during the four years he sojourned there a few words. Certainly his powers matured during this period, and his poetry gained in strength, and beauty, and harmony, and

¹ Claire humorously records in October, 1820, that Shelley's three aversions were "God Almighty, the Lord Chancellor, and didactic poetry."

substantiality ; and in all this some degree of influence must be conceded to the beauty and lucidity of the land and climate. But Shelley was twenty-five when he arrived, and much must be allowed purely to development. Some of his finest lyrics were in some degree suggested by the sights and sounds which surrounded him, as the "Ode to the Skylark" and "The Pine Forest of the Cascine near Pisa," which developed into the "Invitation" and the "Recollection," addressed to Jane Williams ;¹ and we may doubt whether the brightness and purity of his most exquisite love lyrics of 1820 to 1822 could have been evoked beneath our leaden skies and intangible mistiness. There is in these a certain directness of feeling, which we feel to be, not Italian but of Italy. "Epipsychedion," again, is the offspring of a brighter, a warmer, and a more luminous land than England. "Alastor" is of English generation and "Epipsychedion" a daughter of Italy.

But on the whole, Shelley was less influenced by the lands he sojourned in—even by such a land of inspiration and genius as Italy—than another poet would have been. It was part of the innate strength of the poet and the man that he was little subject to outer influence. Every man and woman who came in contact with him reflected his influence ; but few of them left any lasting trace on him. Byron's poetry is largely coloured by the Italian influences

¹ Two dates in Williams's diary are particularly interesting in connection with these poems to Jane. On Saturday, the 2nd February, Williams enters : "Fine warm day. Jane accompanies Mary and S. to the seashore through the Cascine." On the 15th February, after a series of fine days, Williams records a "cloudy damp day."

round him ; Italian life and politics, and to some extent the history and poetry of the Italians, have influenced his muse, and his best poems—the IVth Canto of “Childe Harold,” and “Don Juan,” and “Beppo,” and the “Prophecy of Dante,” with all the world of passion and life contained in them, could not have been written out of Italy.

But “Prometheus Unbound” and the “Witch of Atlas” belong to no country ; they are evolved entirely from within the soul and mind of Shelley. The scenery, in its grandeur and its terror and its beauty, is not that of the Alps or the Apennines any more than of the Valley of the Thames. They are the mountains and the abysses and the vast spaces and the heavens of the poet’s mind that he has given us ; but we may allow that the Thermæ of Caracalla and the Apennines near Pisa were the immediate influences which set the right chords vibrating within.



PINE FOREST NEAR VIAREGGIO

TIT
PUBLISHER

ACTIVIST LEADERSHIP
THROUGH EDUCATION

CHAPTER XXX

AFTER THE WRECK—THE DISPERSION OF THE PISAN CIRCLE

TEN days after the loss of the *Ariel*, after much vain searching and inquiry, directed by Trelawny, had been made—ten days during which all the torments of hope and fear were endured and the poor widows lived an eternity of agonizing doubt—the bodies were recovered ; Shelley's near Viareggio on the 18th, and that of Williams on the 17th, three miles nearer Leghorn, close to the Tower of Migliarino by the Bocca del Serchio,¹ which lies between Viareggio and the mouth of the Arno. On the same day as the recovery of Shelley's body, another corpse was thrown up on the shores of Massa, a headless trunk, which must have been the remains of Charles Vivian, the eighteen-year-old sailor lad attached to the *Ariel*.

The following letter preserved in the Archives of the State of Lucca, addressed to the Secretary of State for Home and Foreign Affairs in Lucca by the Governor of Viareggio, is the earliest authentic document concerning the finding of Shelley's body :

¹ Misnamed by Trelawny the Bocca Lericcio.

"*Viareggio, 18 July, 1822.*

"YOUR EXCELLENCY,—It is my duty to inform you that this morning the rough seas threw up a corpse which had been partly consumed, which, after due inspection by the Tribunal in the interests of Public Health, has been buried on the shore, covered with quicklime in compliance with the Marine sanitary regulations.

"We have no information regarding same, but it is thought likely to be one of the young Englishmen who are reported to have been drowned on the passage they undertook as far back as July the 8th, in a small brig-shaped launch which left Leghorn for the Gulf of Spezia, the sea having thrown up the other body on the Tuscan shore.

"Your Excellency's, etc.

"(signed) G. P. FREDIANI

"P.S.—A circumstance which confirms my idea that this must be one of the said Englishmen, is that an English book was discovered in the pocket of the double-breasted tweed jacket which he was wearing.

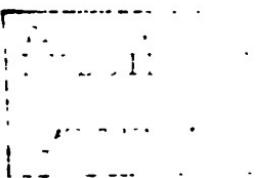
"The other articles of clothing found on the body were a pair of nankin breeches, and a pair of shoes over white socks, all of which have been buried in compliance with the regulations."¹

Towards midday on the 14th August the body of Williams, already a prey to advanced corruption, was disinterred from its temporary resting-place in the sands, and burnt in the presence of Trelawny, Byron, Leigh Hunt, and the military provided for the purpose by the Tuscan authorities.

¹ *Vide Guido Biagi—“Gli Ultimi Giorni di P. B. Shelley.”*

VIAREGGIO THE SHORE.





On the day following, the 15th August, Shelley's remains were consumed by the flames on the shore near Viareggio, near the spot where the body had been buried some weeks previously, in the presence of Trelawny, Captain Shenley, Byron, and Leigh Hunt, and a squad of the Lucchese soldiery.¹ Frankincense and salt were thrown into the furnaces, and wine and oil poured over what remained of the dead bodies—more wine in Shelley's case than he had consumed in life.

Trelawny did not suffer the *Ariel* to rest quietly in her grave beneath the waters, and two months later she was recovered some fifteen miles from land. "Everything is in her, and clearly proves she was not capsized," wrote Captain Roberts, who at Trelawny's request supervised these operations. Money, clothes, papers—among the latter two notebooks of Shelley's, and Williams's precious Journal—books, and a hamper of wine that Shelley had bought at Leghorn as a present to his useful friend Signor Maglian, the harbour-master of Lerici—all were found in their place. But further investigation into the condition of the wrecked boat convinced Roberts that she must have been run down by some of the feluccas in the squall. Trelawny and the Genoese mate of the *Bolivar* noticed certain spars and oars which they thought belonged to the *Ariel* on board a felucca on the day of the wreck, but the crew stoutly denied that they were such—a denial which, if neither truthful nor yet indicative of guilt, might be well

¹ As regards locality and some minor details I follow Sig. Guido Biagi's account, derived principally from contemporary legal documents. Trelawny's account appears to be not entirely correct on such points.

accounted for by the severity of the quarantine regulations, which rendered it inopportune to have anything to do with another vessel in distress. The captain of one of these feluccas recounted to Trelawny that he had seen the *Ariel* shortly before and after the disaster, but had lost sight of her at the actual moment. But the exact circumstances which closed the scene on the *Ariel* and her occupants can never be known.

It was inevitable that round such a disaster reports and stories of various kinds should in time have sprung up ; and more than half a century later a story got about of a dying confession made twelve years earlier by an old sailor to a priest to the effect that he was one of a crew of five who ran down the *Ariel*, thinking Byron was on board, for the sake of plunder. To Trelawny, in his old age, this seemed to explain the long-standing mystery of his friends' death ; but in the absence of any more positive evidence, and knowing how utterly untrustworthy such stories often prove to be, it cannot be accepted with any confidence, and we must be content to abide with the mystery.

In November Shelley's ashes were deposited in the beautiful Protestant Cemetery in Rome by the Rev. Richard Burgess [see Appendix]. Comparatively few of the English then resident in Rome were present at the ceremony : General Sir George Cockburn, who attended so as to pay that attention to the poet's memory which in his opinion Shelley's "character and genius demanded," believed that many abstained from bigoted or political motives ; others, no doubt the majority, knew nothing of the circumstance.



OLD PROTESTANT CEMETERY AND PYRAMID OF CESTIUS, ROME

Shortly after this Trelawny arrived in Rome, and being dissatisfied with the unisolated situation of the poet's grave, he caused his remains to be disinterred, and himself deposited them in their final resting-place, under the old Roman wall at the foot of the pyramid which forms the tomb of Caius Cestius.

Thus ended the Pisan circle. "The fine spirit that had animated us and held us together was gone," wrote Trelawny. "Left to our own devices, we degenerated apace."

Lord Byron and the Gambas, Leigh Hunt and his family, Mrs. Shelley and Jane, with their children, settled for the time in Albaro, and Trelawny in Genoa, close by. Thus those who remained of the little circle of friends were united in material proximity, but disunited and scattered in spirit, dissatisfied and unhappy individually, like a couple united in wedlock who have outlived their love. Byron chafed to be off somewhere, anywhere away from recent associations, and a year later he embarked for Greece with Trelawny and the young Count Gamba, where his tragic death added the last stone to the pillar of his fame. The *Liberal*—of which the first number appeared on the 15th October, 1822—dragged out a protracted agony of four months, and was then buried, and with it all poor Leigh Hunt's high hopes when he came out to Italy. He and his family lingered on in Liguria and Tuscany till September, 1825, when they returned to England.

The most sorrowful and pitiful figure of the scattered circle is Mary Shelley, who from a glorious companionship of eight years with the poet, whose genius and virtue she was one of the very few of her generation to appreciate—and who had faithfully

stood by him, loved him, encouraged him—endured for him—was left to a long, dexterous, timorous, and inglorious widowhood with the care of a child who, for all her love and maternal devotion, must fatally have proved a disappointment. She lived to see the son of inspired lover grow up into a deserving but commonplace country gentleman, worthy of his forefathers but absolutely different from his father.

If Mary Shelley had died with her husband, would have remained as a luminous figure, the hand-chosen companion of an immortal poet; author at nineteen of "*Frankenstein*"; a woman of great promise, of courage and understanding, a model of conjugal fidelity. But she survived him thirty years—and lived on into unromantic middle-age, battling silently and with inglorious courage against all that is meanest and most sordid in life—poverty of a genteel kind; obscurity in spirit-crushing, mean London streets (look at *Gower Place*, and think of San Terenzo, and shudder!); the narrowness and brutal prejudice of the Shelley family, who kept her mouth sealed and her pen idle for good by the eternal threat of stoppage of supplies; the eternal money difficulties of her father, to whom she was ever such an admirable daughter; the ingratitude and inconstancy of friends. She wrote commonplace books for a commonplace public, grew timid and conventional and deplorably nervous in her life and work. And we remember all this, and cavil at her faults, criticize her because she was not more of a saint, fall foul of her jealousy and coldness, her inconsequent yearnings after the society which rejected her, her deference to the conventions. But

ged his justice we must remember also the other side of long the picture, and feel duly grateful to Mary Shelley for showing what she was suffered to record of her husband. Nor should we ever forget what we, and what Shelley, owed to this woman, who, while irradiated by his love and son of the warmth of his genius, none the less endured from his genius, his unworldliness, his reckless generosity, and his all-embracing sympathies and love of beauty, what no commonplace woman would have tolerated or understood, and what few women would have borne with such good grace.

APPENDIX

THE following very interesting statement concerning the burial of Shelley's ashes has been kindly communicated to me by Mr. C. D. Locock, with the permission of Lady Murray, daughter of the late Rev. Richard Burgess, B.D., and has unfortunately arrived too late for insertion in the text.

* * * * *

Copy of document in the handwriting of the late Miss Sophia Burgess, daughter of the Rev. Richard Burgess, B.D.:

"In the latter part of November 1822, I arrived for the first time at Rome, and after a few days I went to the office of Mr. Freeborn in the Via Condotti who was at that time the Consular Agent of Mr. Consul Parke [r ?], whose residence was supposed to be at Ancona, or at Civita Vecchia. Mr. Freeborn at that time was also a Wine Merchant and a commissioner and was ready to do kind offices and give information to British subjects arriving at Rome. Seeing some outward signs of an ecclesiastic in me, he expressed his happiness that a Clergyman had arrived and he wished to communicate to me a matter which had given him much anxiety and asked me to 'walk this way.' I followed my guide down steps into his wine cellar and pointing out a square wooden box painted chestnut ingrained he said 'I have been waiting some time for a clergyman to come and I want you to bury that box.' Upon enquiring what the box might contain Mr. Freeborn in a business like tone

replied 'Mr. Shelley's ashes Sir.'—I had heard the then wide rumour of the cremation of Shelley's body taken out of the gulf of Spezzia where he met with his melancholy end, and it appears that Shelley had often expressed a wish that wherever he might die his remains should be carried to Rome and buried in the cemetery 'Acatholici' in the grave where the remains of his son were buried.—It was stated that this wish could not have been complied with without the process of burning, such was the state of the body from the length of time it had been in the water. Having consulted with a clergyman whom I met in Rome we considered that as the people in Rome had knowledge of the facts of the death of Shelley and the proceedings of his friends in respect to his remains, and as various speculations were afloat on the kind of Burial he should have, and as absurd conjectures were noised about it would be more prudent on our part to put an end to all sensational rumours and inter the remains in the cemetery in the usual way.

"The Box was put into a coffin of ordinary size and shape and at an early hour of the day was taken through the streets of Rome followed by two English Clergymen who had never seen the deceased and only knew that he was a great Poet and a British subject and had expressed an earnest desire to be interred in a Protestant Christian burial place, where his son's remains were already laid.

"On arriving at the cemetery I found two persons who had come to do honour to the remains of the deceased Poet —one was General Cockburn who wrote a book about Sicily, the other was Sir Charles Slyte (?) Bart.—The portion of the burial service which is read 'when they come to the grave' was read under a beautiful Italian sky in November and in the presence of the two gentlemen above named and the Italian custodian of the cemetery.

"The wish of Shelley after all could not be complied with as his son had been buried in the old plot of ground and there was nothing to mark the spot ; after many attempts

in different places where the custode and grave digger thought they might be found and transferred to the new Burial ground, and placed near the grave of Shelley, the search was given up."

These reminiscences are communicated to his old and valued friend John Lettsom Elliot by Richard Burgess at Brighton June 20, 1874.

¹ The Rev. Richard Burgess, B.D., St. John's, Cambridge — English Chaplain at Rome, 1823-36—Prebendary of St. Paul's, late Rector of Horringer and Ickworth (?), formerly Rector of Upper Chelsea, died at Brighton, April 12, 1881, aged 84.

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